



**Event marketing: a comparison of practices between SMEs  
and New SMEs (NSMEs)**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nowadays, the more traditional marketing and communication tools are becoming less effective (Hede & Kellett, 2011) and thus businesses are turning towards event marketing. At the same time, SME marketing literature shows us that many SMEs struggle with their marketing activities for a number of reasons, such as: limited resources (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Carson & Cromie, 1990; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011; O'Donnell, 2011) and a lack of SME specific marketing guidelines (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). Therefore, I wish to present event marketing as an attractive marketing activity for SMEs.

The aim of my thesis is to explore these two topics together and more precisely, to understand the managerial event marketing practices of SMEs and New SMEs (NSMEs), as well as to compare practices between the two types of firms. By using a qualitative study approach with semi-structured interviews, my goal is to better understand how the event marketing managers of SMEs and NSMEs use event marketing.

In the end, my results demonstrate many findings. First, that both SMEs and NSMEs do not consider event marketing to be part of their overall marketing strategy. Second, that higher-level management has a significant impact on the Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP). Third, that although SMEs and NSMEs are both similar and different when it comes to their event marketing practices and that they share more points in common, there are still two very important points where the two types of firms differ: their objectives in using event marketing and the ways they manage their events. This signifies that in terms of event marketing guidelines, SMEs and NSMEs require their own separate guidelines. Fourth, most SMEs and NSMEs have a form of EMPP, which reinforces previous event marketing planning literature that shows the importance of the EMPP. Fifth, the main reason why SMEs and NSMEs choose to use event marketing is because they both see it as one of the most effective tools in achieving their goals and objectives. Sixth, both SMEs and NSMEs manage their events well, but with certain areas to improve for each firm type. For SMEs, this includes reducing the amount of trial and error as well as having a budget and for NSMEs, this includes improving upon time resource limitations. And finally, my research demonstrates that both SMEs and NSMEs have limited evaluation processes when it comes to evaluating their event marketing initiatives.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THANK YOU NOTE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1 Event Marketing.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1.1 Event marketing definition.....	9
2.1.2 Event marketing context .....	9
2.1.3 Event marketing planning process (EMPP) .....	9
<b>2.2 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.2.1 SME context.....	10
2.2.2 SMEs and marketing.....	10
<b>2.3 New Small and Medium Enterprises (NSMEs) .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.3.1 NSME context.....	12
2.3.2 NSMEs and marketing .....	12
<b>2.4 Research Questions .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3. Conceptual Framework.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3.1 Presentation of the context of the study .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1.1 SME vs. NSME Context .....	15
<b>3.2 Conceptual Framework .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.2.1 Event marketing planning process (EMPP) .....	16
3.2.2 Event marketing planning process: objectives.....	16
3.2.3 Event marketing planning process: design.....	17
3.2.4 Event marketing planning process: delivery.....	18
3.2.5 Event marketing planning process: evaluation .....	18
3.2.6 Event marketing planning process: event marketing manager's role .....	19
<b>4. Methodology .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.1. A qualitative approach.....</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1.1. Semi-structured interviews .....	20
4.1.2. The recruitment process.....	20
4.1.3. Justification of the chosen participants.....	21
4.1.4. Presentation of the participants.....	22
<b>4.2. Data collection.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.3. Ethics .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.4. Analysis method.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5. Results and Discussion.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5.1. SME Results and Discussion: The Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP) .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5.2. SME Results and Discussion: Marketing Events Objectives .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5.3. SME Results and Discussion: Management of Marketing Events.....</b>	<b>28</b>
5.3.1. SME Marketing Events Decisions .....	29
5.3.2. SME Choices Behind Chosen Marketing Events .....	31

5.3.3.	SME Management of the Event Marketing Budget.....	32
5.3.4.	SME Challenges with Organizing Marketing Events.....	33
5.3.5.	SME Marketing Events and Communication Channels .....	35
<b>5.4.</b>	<b>SME Results and Discussion: Evaluation of Marketing Events .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>5.5.</b>	<b>SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing’s Role Within the Overall Marketing Strategy.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>5.6.</b>	<b>SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing Manager’s Role.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5.7.</b>	<b>New SME Results and Discussion: The Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP) .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>5.8.</b>	<b>New SME Results and Discussion: Marketing Events Objectives.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.9.</b>	<b>New SME Results and Discussion: Management of Marketing Events .....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.9.1.	New SME Marketing Events Decisions.....	47
5.9.2.	New SME Choices Behind Chosen Marketing Events.....	51
5.9.3.	New SME Management of the Event Marketing Budget .....	54
5.9.4.	New SME Challenges with Organizing Marketing Events .....	56
5.9.5.	New SME Marketing Events and Communication Channels.....	59
<b>5.10.</b>	<b>New SME Results and Discussion: Evaluation of Marketing Events.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>5.11.</b>	<b>New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing’s Role Within the Overall Marketing Strategy.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>5.12.</b>	<b>New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing Manager’s Role .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>5.13.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>5.14.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: The Event Marketing Planning Process .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>5.15.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Marketing Events Objectives.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>5.16.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Management of Marketing Events.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>5.17.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Evaluation of Marketing Events.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>5.18.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing’s Role Within the Overall Marketing Strategy .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>5.19.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing Manager’s Role .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>5.20.</b>	<b>SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Appendix I:	The “Marketing space” conceptual model (Crowther, 2011).....	79
Appendix II:	A model of the evaluation process (Brown et al., 2015) .....	80
Appendix III:	My interview guide in English .....	81
Appendix IV:	My interview guide in French.....	84
Appendix V:	Snapshot of coding chart for results .....	87
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>88</b>

**LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1.4a .....23  
Table 4.1.4b .....23

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.3 .....13  
Figure 2.4 .....14  
Figure 3.2 .....16  
Figure 4.1.3 .....22  
Figure 5.15 .....71

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## 1. Introduction

Many authors have conducted research on marketing and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), as marketing is underutilized by SMEs (Cheng, Lourenço & Resnick, 2016; Fillis, 2012; O'Donnell, 2011; Parrott, Roomi & Holliman, 2010; Reijonen, 2010). Marketing should be important to these SMEs, as it contributes to: organizational performance (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Fillis, 2012; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009), company growth (O'Donnell, 2011; Reijonen, 2010) and customer acquisition (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). Additionally, a lack of marketing partially explains why SMEs fail (O'Donnell, 2011; Reijonen, 2010). However, little research has been conducted on exactly what kinds of marketing activities should be adopted by these SMEs, especially new SMEs (NSMEs). As well, no authors have conducted research on NSMEs' marketing practices, only those of SMEs. It is important to make a distinction between a SME and a NSME, as a NSME is in its early growth phase (Gilmore, 2011) and thus the need to build its reputation, produce sales and find clients (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010).

Event marketing (or marketing events) is an example of a marketing practice which can and should be adopted by both SMEs and NSMEs, for several reasons. Bresciani & Eppler (2010) conducted research on marketing practices adopted by Swiss entrepreneurs and found that successful entrepreneurs make "use of events as promotional activities". Focusing on event marketing is relevant, as event marketing is gaining in popularity (Johnson, 2008), as the more traditional marketing communications tools are becoming less efficient (Hede & Kellett, 2011). Marketing events serve as a communication (Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013; Wood, 2009) and promotion tool, whose purpose is to promote a company and its brands and to differentiate it from competitors (Leischnig, Schwertfeger & Geigenmueller, 2011). Additionally, event marketing plays an important role in attaining a firm's sales objectives (Crowther, 2011). This is all very important for a NSME, who is just starting out and trying to build a consumer basis and a reputation.

The aim of my thesis is to explore these two topics together and more precisely, to understand the managerial event marketing practices of SMEs and NSMEs, as well as to compare practices between the two types of firms. By using a qualitative research approach consisting of semi-structured interviews, my goal is to better understand how the event marketing managers of SMEs and NSMEs use event marketing. My research will aim to discover: (1) Do SMEs have an event marketing planning process (EMPP) and do they need one? (2) Why do SMEs choose to use event marketing? (3) How is event marketing managed by SMEs? (4) How do SMEs evaluate their events? (5) What role does event marketing play within the SME's overall marketing strategy? (6) What impact does the event manager have on the event marketing planning process (EMPP)? (7) What is the difference between an SME and a new SME's event marketing practices?

I will begin by presenting a literature review to highlight the central themes of this study: event marketing and SME literature. Then, I will describe the conceptual framework used for my thesis and will continue to an analysis and discussion of my results. Finally, I will present the conclusions of my research, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future opportunities for research.



## 2. Literature Review

This section presents my literature review and highlights the different themes studied in my research project. The literature review is divided into three sections: one on event marketing literature, a second on SME literature and a third on my research objectives.

### 2.1 Event Marketing

#### 2.1.1 Event marketing definition

Event marketing can be defined in more than one way, depending on one's research objectives. For this research, event marketing will be defined as follows: either as "self-staged" (Drengner, Gaus & Jahn, 2008) by the firm itself or outsourced to another firm and either as a hosted event (ex. Product launch, open house, cocktail party, etc.) or as an attended event (ex. Trade shows, conferences, festivals, etc.). Additionally, the terms event marketing and marketing events will be used interchangeably.

#### 2.1.2 Event marketing context

To date, the majority of event marketing research has focused on the effects of sponsorship and the social and economic benefits of events, in the context of tourism, festival and sporting events (Park & Park, 2017; Van Niekerk, 2017).

Event marketing is one of many marketing activities which a firm may utilize as part of its global marketing strategy (Crowther, 2011). Event marketing is rapidly gaining in popularity, as the more traditional marketing and communication tools are becoming less efficient (Hede & Kellett, 2011) as consumers are less receptive to them (Martensen, Grønholdt, Bendtsen & Jensen, 2007; Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013). This is where event marketing comes into play, as it offers an interesting alternative to traditional advertising mediums (Crowther, 2010a; Gupta, 2003; Tafesse, 2016). Event marketing is an interesting alternative for many reasons, as it serves as: a communication tool (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2010a; Crowther, 2010b; Gupta, 2003; Leischnig, Schwertfeger & Geigenmueller, 2011; Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013; Wood, 2009), a promotion tool (Crowther & Donlan, 2011; Leischnig et al., 2011), a branding tool (Crowther, 2010a; Crowther, 2010b), a creativity tool (Crowther, 2010b) and as a strategic tool (Crowther, 2010a; Crowther, 2010b).

Crowther & Donlan (2011, p.4) argue that "the many and varied events hosted by organisations each year have profound scope and meaning, much more than extant literature reflects, perhaps much more than marketing and event managers realise". This goes to show the importance of event marketing and the need to conduct further research.

#### 2.1.3 Event marketing planning process (EMPP)

Over the years, marketing planning and management processes have gained in importance, due to the "turbulent business environment" (Ashill, Frederikson & Davies, 2003). The more

traditional marketing planning model consists of logical-sequential decision making: objectives, strategies, tactics, implementation and control (Greenley, Hooley & Saunders, 2004). However, several authors disapprove of these more traditional models, as they argue that they fail to take into consideration management processes, which play an important role in the overall marketing planning process. They argue that management processes, such as organisational dimensions and managerial behaviour should be taken into consideration as well (Ashill et al., 2003; Greenley et al., 2004). Ashill et al. (2003) also argue the importance of taking into consideration the skills of the marketing planning decision makers, to avoid the misunderstanding of marketing tools. However, the consensus with regards to marketing planning is that it improves the performance of the firm (Whalen & Boush, 2014).

An example of an event marketing planning process (EMPP) is the “Marketing space”; a conceptual framework developed by Crowther (2011) based on his “review of related marketing and event studies literature” (see appendix I). The framework depicts the EMPP from the company and the attendee view. Crowther (2011) emphasises the importance of his model, as “events are too often an informal adjunct to marketing activity lacking strategic integration and intent”. As well, “events must be scientifically planned, executed, and evaluated” (Gupta, as cited in Crowther, 2010b). It is therefore important to recognize event marketing as a part of the global marketing strategy and implementation process, necessitating its own planning process.

In comparison to the marketing planning process, both are very similar, in that they are both logical-sequential decision based models and share common components. As well, both are traditional models. However, the marketing planning process is more complex and comprises additional components that the event marketing planning process does not have; this is mostly due to the nature of the two models. This is normal, as the marketing planning model encompasses all marketing activities, whereas the event marketing model is one of many marketing activities.

## 2.2 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

### 2.2.1 SME context

According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (2016b), a small enterprise is comprised of 1-99 employees and a medium enterprise of 100-499 employees; these are recognized as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs play a very important role in the Canadian economy, as they account for 99.7% of all firm types (97.9% small, 1.8% medium and 0.3% large) (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2016a). In addition, 90.3% of the working Canadian population work for SMEs, in comparison to just 9.7% who work for large enterprises. Therefore, from this information, we can see the importance of SMEs for the well-being of the Canadian economy.

### 2.2.2 SMEs and marketing

Over the years, there has been an increase in the amount of research done on the topics of SMEs and entrepreneurship, as these fields are growing in popularity. Specific research on SMEs

is important, for the above-mentioned reasons, but also because they are distinct from large organisations in many ways. According to Carson & Cromie (1990), it is the business objectives and management style which really sets the two firms apart. Many authors also agree that the marketing practices used in SMEs are different than in larger organizations (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Fillis, 2002; Harrigan et al., 2012; Reijonen, 2010; Solé, 2013; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009). According to Parrott et al. (2010), SMEs have “their own particular characteristics which largely determine their marketing preoccupations and concerns”. In comparison to large corporations, SMEs are typically limited in terms of: financial capital (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Cheng et al., 2016; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; O'Donnell, 2011; Reijonen, 2010; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009), marketing expertise (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Cheng et al., 2016; Reijonen, 2010), operational/internal structures and processes (Gilmore, 2011), time (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Reijonen, 2010) and their overall resources (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011; O'Donnell, 2011). However, SMEs have certain advantages which larger firms do not have, which include: more flexibility (Walsh & Lipinski, 2009), innovation (Morrish, 2011; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009), creativity (Morrish, 2011) and lower overhead costs (Walsh & Lipinski, 2009).

In terms of research conducted on SMEs and marketing strategy, one overwhelming result is that marketing (in general) is underutilized by SMEs (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Cheng, Lourenço & Resnick, 2016; Fillis, 2012; O'Donnell, 2011; Parrott, Roomi & Holliman, 2010; Reijonen, 2010). Marketing should be important to these SMEs, as it contributes to: organizational performance (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Fillis, 2012; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009), company growth (O'Donnell, 2011; Reijonen, 2010) and customer acquisition (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). Additionally, a lack of marketing partially explains why some SMEs fail (O'Donnell, 2011; Reijonen, 2010).

Another part of the problem is that SMEs have a difficult time finding marketing guidelines and plans appropriate to their business size and thus, they are “repeating the classic mistakes of larger organizations in assuming, guessing and making gut-feel decisions” with regards to their marketing activities (Parrott et al., 2010). The study conducted by Parrott et al. (2010) concludes that for the SMEs who are using marketing, they are over-estimating the effectiveness of their marketing programs and are not taking the time to fully understand their current marketing decision making processes.

Another interesting finding in SME marketing literature is the idea of entrepreneurial marketing, where “entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur” (Gilmore, 2011). This implies that the entrepreneur (i.e. the business owner) is the person carrying out the marketing initiatives (Morrish, 2011). Further, entrepreneurial marketing recognizes that “the entrepreneur is equally a central actor in the marketing process” (Morrish, 2011).

### 2.3 New Small and Medium Enterprises (NSMEs)

### 2.3.1 NSME context

New small and medium enterprises (NSMEs) differentiate themselves from other small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as they are new businesses. I have chosen to include not only start-ups, but also seed-stage firms and just new small and medium sized businesses, like stores and cafés. It is important to also focus on these NSMEs and to distinguish them from older and more mature SMEs, for several reasons. First off, NSMEs play an important role in many economies (Harrigan, Ramsey & Ibbotson, 2012; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009), as they often provide new employment opportunities (Gilmore, 2011). In Canada alone, over the years, we have seen an increase in the number of entrepreneurs and new businesses (Fisher & Reuber, 2010). In fact, Canada ranks second worldwide (behind the USA) in terms of entrepreneurial activity, which accounts for 18% of the Canadian work force (CBC News, 2015; Grant, 2015). This research shows the importance of NSMEs for the economy and why it is important to conduct further research on them.

### 2.3.2 NSMEs and marketing

A second point of distinction between SMEs and NSMEs is that they are at a different life cycle stage from one another. For example, the need to find customers and produce sales is more important for a NSME than an SME, because if the NSME does not succeed, it will fail (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). If the SME fails, they will still be able to rely on their existing customer basis and their current sales, for the time being. In essence, SMEs benefit from more time than NSMEs, as they are more established firms (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). Like SMEs, NSMEs “can rarely find specific, tailored guidelines in the traditional branding literature, as it focuses largely on multinational companies and well-established firms” (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010, p.357). These guidelines are essential for NSMEs, as they are limited in terms of resources, internal structures and processes (Rode & Vallaster, 2005), and they have a fundamental need to build their reputation (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010).

Bresciani & Eppler’s (2010) research on branding practices of Swiss NSMEs further shows that “branding is a crucial activity for the successful establishment of a new company, that helps with customer acquisition, retention and to build a favorable reputation”; all of which will contribute to the survival of the company. This is important to note, as research demonstrates that survival in the entrepreneurial world can be difficult. Canada may rank second worldwide in terms of the number of new businesses created per year, but the amount of established, stable and successful businesses is on par with the rest of the world (Grant, 2015). As of 2006, 15% of new businesses will not survive the first year, 30% the second year, 38% the third year and 49% the fifth year (Fisher & Reuber, 2010). Therefore, it can be inferred that as a new business owner in Canada, it is imperative to set yourself apart from competition, from the beginning, to ensure long term and stable growth; this is where event marketing comes into play.

Like SMEs, the entrepreneur can also play a crucial role in the early stages of the NSME (Rode & Vallaster, 2005).

## 2.4 Research Questions

Three topics have been presented: event marketing, SME and NSME literature. The event marketing literature focuses on its popularity, utility and relevance and the SME and NSME literature focuses on the importance, distinctions, challenges and lack-of marketing practices of these businesses. Although each of these topics has been researched, little to no research has been done on the combination of these topics. It is this combination of topics, as shown in Figure 2.3, which present a gap in the literature and thus provides my research opportunity: a comparison of event marketing practices between SMEs and NSMEs.

The objective of my research is to understand the managerial perspective of SMEs and NSMEs' event marketing practices and more precisely, to compare practices between these two types of firms to provide event managers with guidelines.

**My research questions are the following:**

- (1) Do SMEs have an event marketing planning process (EMPP) and do they need one?**
- (2) Why do SMEs choose to use event marketing?**
- (3) How is event marketing managed by SMEs?**
- (4) How do SMEs evaluate their events?**
- (5) What role does event marketing play within the SME's overall marketing strategy?**
- (6) What impact does the event manager have on the event marketing planning process (EMPP)?**
- (7) What is the difference between an SME and a new SME's event marketing practices?**

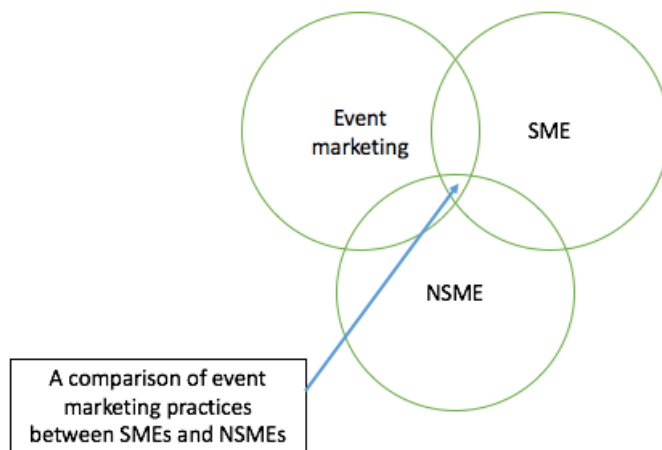


Figure 2.3 Literature Gap

	<b>ATTENDED EVENTS</b>	<b>HOSTED EVENTS</b>
<b>SMEs</b>		
<b>NSMEs</b>		

Figure 2.4 Attended and Hosted events by SMEs and NSMEs

It is important to include Figure 2.4, as a distinction between attended and hosted events needs to be made. As mentioned earlier, organizing events can entail either hosting an event, such as a cocktail party or a product launch, whereas attending an event can include attending a trade show or a conference. The main distinction between these two, is that when you host an event, you are the main event organizer and are hosting people at your event. When you attend an event, you are attending an event organized by someone else. However, in both cases, event planning is required, but to a different extent. For the purpose of my study, I have chosen both SMEs and NSMEs who at the very least attend or host at least one event per year. In some cases, some businesses both attend and host events.

### 3. Conceptual Framework

This section will explain the conceptual framework developed for my research study. I will begin by defining the context of the study, by describing the various contexts I have chosen to take into consideration. Then, I will explain my conceptual framework that I developed for my study. Finally, I will go into further detail for each component of my framework.

#### 3.1 Presentation of the context of the study

For my research project, I have chosen to explore the managerial perspective of event marketing practices and to draw comparisons between event marketing practices in SMEs and in new SMEs (NSMEs). These decisions will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

As for the pertinence of the subject, as mentioned in the previous section, I have observed a gap in the literature of event marketing and SMEs. To further develop on this, event marketing is an example of a marketing practice which can and should be adopted by SMEs and NSMEs, for several reasons. As mentioned, the more traditional marketing communication tools are becoming less efficient (Hede & Kellett, 2011) as consumers are less receptive to them (Martensen,

Grønholdt, Bendtsen & Jensen, 2007; Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013). Therefore, event marketing offers an interesting alternative to traditional advertising mediums (Gupta, 2003; Tafesse, 2016), because of its interactive nature with the consumer (Close et al., 2006; Leischnig et al., 2011; Martensen & Grønholdt, 2008; Tafesse, 2016). Event marketing is also one of many marketing tools with many utilities and purposes. Therefore, marketing events present an excellent medium that NSMEs and SMEs can use to attain their firm objectives. Attaining objectives is primordial to NSMEs and SMEs, as they will fail if they cannot accomplish this. It will be interesting to see if NSMEs and SMEs have the same firm objectives behind using event marketing, as these two types of firms are both similar and different.

### 3.1.1 SME vs. NSME Context

The first distinction I chose to make for my research project is to compare event marketing practices in SMEs and in NSMEs. As mentioned, there are several differential points between the marketing practices of SMEs and of large corporations (Cheng et al., 2016); notably, limitations in terms of resources (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; O'Donnell, 2011). Therefore, SMEs and NSMEs cannot and should not use the same types of marketing activities as large corporations, because of their numerous limitations. This is further explained by the fact that large corporations use “conventional marketing theories and models [which] neglect the uniqueness of SMEs” thus further highlighting the difference between SMEs’ and large corporations’ marketing practices (Cheng et al., 2016, p.497).

With that said, these differential points are even more present with NSMEs than SMEs, as they are new businesses just starting out. As a NSME, the need to build a reputation and find clients (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010) is primordial to its survival, more so than for a SME, who already has a reputation and clients. Therefore, I have chosen to make this distinction between a SME and a NSME, as they are two different entities, and this leads me to believe that their event marketing practices will be different.

## 3.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 3.2 represents the conceptual framework for my study and is adapted from Crowther’s (2011) model (see appendix I). As my focus is on event marketing managerial practices, I have created the “Event Marketing Planning Process” model (EMPP), which focuses on the company view. Therefore, I intend to research the model, but only in terms of its validity and utility. Do event marketing managers use a planning process for their events? How is it similar or different from this one?

I have chosen to further focus my research on the “Objectives” and the “Evaluation” phases, as well as the role of the event marketing manager in the planning process. I have chosen these specific aspects, as I am interested in the managerial aspects of event marketing. Further, the “design” and “delivery” aspects are not consistent and homogenous, as they vary from one event to another (Getz, 2007). Therefore, conformity and consensus would not be available on these



points. Lastly, I will be comparing this framework in the SME vs. NSME context, to determine if there are differences in their practices.

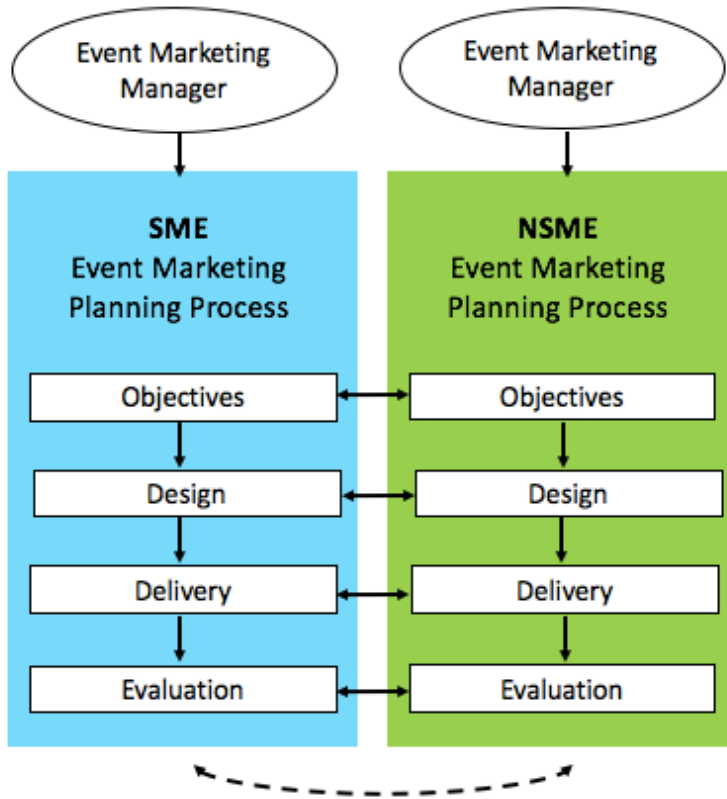


Figure 3.2 The “Event Marketing Planning Process” and Comparison Conceptual Framework

### 3.2.1 Event marketing planning process (EMPP)

As mentioned, the “Event Marketing Planning Process” (EMPP) is made of four phases: Objectives, Design, Delivery and Evaluation. As well, there is the role of the event marketing manager to take into consideration. Over the next few sections, I will go into more detail on these different phases. If we look at the model as a whole, my goal is to understand it’s role in real-life situations, within SMEs and NSMEs and to understand the various facets of each phase and their interactions with each other. This point addresses four of my research questions: **Do SMEs have a formal event marketing planning process (EMPP) and do they need one? What role does event marketing play within the overall marketing strategy, for a SME? What is the difference between an SME and a new SME’s event marketing practices?**

### 3.2.2 Event marketing planning process: objectives

The first phase of the Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP) is the objectives of the marketing event. Objectives are the reasons why a firm will choose to use event marketing. This



is the most important step in the EMPP (Wilson, 2004), as it sets the tone for the overall process and should reflect the firm's mission (Wilson, 2004). Extensive research has already been conducted on this topic and shows that event marketing serves a multi-purpose agenda, as it can:

- Increase sales (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2011; Gupta, 2003; Reijonen, 2010; Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005),
- promote a company and its brands (Leischnig et al., 2011; Reijonen, 2010),
- increase brand awareness (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2011; Johnson, 2008; Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005),
- differentiate a company from its competitors (Leischnig et al., 2011),
- allow a face-to-face contact with the target audience by actively engaging customers (Close et al., 2006; Leischnig et al., 2011; Martensen & Grønholdt, 2008; Tafesse, 2016),
- develop relationships (Reijonen, 2010),
- strengthen existing relationships (Crowther, 2011),
- improve brand image (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2011; Sneath et al., 2005),
- serve as a PR opportunity (Crowther, 2011; Johnson, 2008),
- allow you to gain insights and information (Crowther, 2011), and
- build a clientele basis (Reijonen, 2010).

My goal is to determine what the objectives of SMEs and NSMEs are, when using event marketing and to understand the links between these objectives and the event marketing practices. I want to better understand their thought process, with regards to the achievement of these objectives, through event marketing. **This point addresses one of my research questions: why do SMEs choose to use event marketing?**

### 3.2.3 Event marketing planning process: design

The second phase of the EMPP is the design of the marketing event, which includes two phases. The first phase is the selection of the marketing event platform(s), which is chosen based on its ability to best deliver the event objectives (Crowther, 2011). According to Crowther (2011, p.77), “each platform has its own charm, characteristics, and indeed challenges, therefore lending itself to the achievement of specific combinations of event objectives”. He emphasizes the importance of first choosing the objectives and then the event marketing platform and not the other way around. There is a multitude of types of event marketing platforms to choose from, such as: product launches, trade shows, conferences and many more. In this first part of the design process, I intend to determine which platforms SMEs and NSMEs use and to verify if there is a logical link with the event objectives.

The second part of the design phase relates to design tools. According to Getz (2007), there are various design tools which can be used, once the event platform has been chosen. These include:

- Setting and atmosphere,
- theme and programme,

- services, and
- consumables.

However, my study will not focus on this aspect of the planning process, as it is a case-by-case situation, dependent on the event platform chosen.

#### 3.2.4 Event marketing planning process: delivery

The third phase of the EMPP is the delivery of the marketing event, which consists of the steps and processes associated with the delivery. Here too, my study will not focus on this aspect of the planning process, as it is a case-by-case situation dependent on the event platform chosen.

#### 3.2.5 Event marketing planning process: evaluation

The fourth and final phase of the EMPP is the evaluation of the marketing event. This includes: the measures of evaluation, the measures of success and the satisfaction of the event outcome. According to Brown, Getz, Pettersson & Wallstam (2015, p.135), evaluation is “an essential management function of information gathering and feedback through which processes can be improved, goals more effectively attained, and by which organizations can learn and adapt”. It is important to conduct both internal and external event evaluation processes, to capture the perspectives of all stakeholders (Brown et al., 2015). Brown et al. (2015) have developed a very comprehensive event marketing evaluation framework (see appendix II), which includes:

- Evaluation paradigms,
- reasons to evaluate,
- evaluation contexts,
- what to evaluate,
- measures of evaluation,
- methods of evaluation, and
- uses of evaluation.

The first aspect of the model is the evaluation paradigms and its three types: positivism, interpretive and critical. The positivism evaluation paradigm consists of determining cause and effect, based on quantitative measurement and through experimental designs. The interpretive approach takes into consideration the stakeholders’ view and tries to understand it before making any conclusions. Finally, the critical view is based on action research, where the aim of the evaluation process is to bring about changes to the marketing event (Brown et al., 2015).

The second aspect of the model is reasons to evaluate the marketing event, which includes: to justify the event, to build legitimacy, to assign value, to aid with planning, design and marketing, to solve problems, to clarify logic and goals, to improve management systems, to improve competitiveness, to stay on track, to be successful and to determine outcomes and impacts. The authors also specify that it is important to first determine the function of the evaluation (Brown et al., 2015).

The third aspect of the model is evaluation contexts, which includes: formal vs informal, performance and goal-driven vs goal-free/systems approach, accountability required vs independence, internal vs external and multi-stakeholder, collaborative, participatory vs independent, project-based vs long-term sustainability, single event vs portfolio and one-time event vs periodic. The context is important, as it will determine what type of evaluation is needed, how it is performed and how it is conducted (Brown et al., 2015).

The fourth aspect of the model is what to evaluate, which includes: policies and strategies, environmental conditions, trends and competitors, organizational structure, stakeholders, management practices, event operations, impact causes and effects, event portfolio worth and population health (Brown et al., 2015).

The fifth aspect of the model is measures of evaluation, which includes: efficiency and effectiveness, quality and competence, economic, social, cultural and environmental impact indicators, return on investment (ROI), opportunity cost and externalities (Brown et al., 2015). According to Wilson (2004), money is the logical indicator of success of an event.

The sixth aspect of the model is methods of evaluation, which includes: observation or self-reporting, systems approach, visitor or stakeholder input, experimental research designs, field research designs and action research. The method of evaluation used will depend on the evaluation paradigm that is chosen in the beginning (Brown et al., 2015).

The seventh and final aspect of the model is uses of evaluation, which includes: constant monitoring or feedback, input to project and strategic planning, community or stakeholder engagement and inputs to certification.

I have chosen to include this evaluation model, as it is a very comprehensive model. My goal is not to test out this framework, but rather, to understand its various components and to determine whether SMEs and NSMEs use some, all, or none of these measures to evaluate their marketing events. **This point addresses one of my research questions: How do SMEs evaluate their events?**

### 3.2.6 Event marketing planning process: event marketing manager's role

As mentioned, various authors have commented on the more traditional marketing planning process models, noting that managerial behaviour was not considered and should be (Ashill et al., 2003; Greenley et al., 2004). This was further researched and explained by Ashill et al. (2003), where taking into consideration the skills of the marketing planning decision maker can play a role in avoiding the misunderstanding of marketing tools. Therefore, I have chosen to take into consideration the event marketing manager, to determine whether they have an impact on the EMPP. Crowther's (2010b, p.229) research demonstrates the impact that the event marketing manager can have on the event marketing planning process, where they have "the opportunity to adopt artistic principles to creatively design the event". **This point addresses one of my research questions: what impact does the event manager have on the planning process?**

## 4. Methodology

This section will present the methodology used for my research study. I will begin by explaining my choice of a qualitative approach, followed by an explanation of my recruitment process and a presentation of the interviewees who participated in this study. Afterwards, I will continue with my data collection process and the ethical considerations for my study. Finally, I will conclude with the analysis method I chose for my study.

### 4.1. A qualitative approach

I have chosen a qualitative approach for my research project, as the topic – a comparison of event marketing practices by SMEs and NSMEs – has not yet been researched. As well, the nature of my research questions is exploratory, which calls for a qualitative study. According to Deslauriers (1991), when data is difficult to quantify and requires small samples to be analyzed in-depth, a qualitative approach is a method that facilitates the research process. Therefore, I chose a small sample of SMEs and NSMEs to get a general understanding of event marketing practices by these firms. This qualitative approach allowed me to have access to in-depth data and to increase my comprehension and understanding of this topic.

#### 4.1.1. Semi-structured interviews

I chose to use semi-structured interviews to collect my data as it is “one of the most effective strategies for collecting data from owner-managers of small enterprises” (Curran & Blackburn, 1994, p.127). I conducted a series of face-to-face interviews when possible, otherwise Skype interviews, with SME and NSME managers in charge of their event marketing initiatives. These semi-structured interviews allowed me to really understand the perspective of the respondents, as well as that of the SMEs and NSMEs. I allowed the interviewees to choose a place where they felt most comfortable for the interviews; most of them chose their own office spaces.

#### 4.1.2. The recruitment process

The recruitment process was an important step in this study. To be selected, participants needed to meet certain criterion which would allow me to gather pertinent information to address my research objectives and questions.

The first step for me was to identify potential businesses, which would fall under the SME or the NSME column. To do so, I began by reaching out to my network and see if there were any qualifying businesses. Once I had identified a potential business, I conducted some research on its background, to determine if there was a possible fit with my study. Once I was confident about the fit, I reached out to the business by email, to confirm the fit with my study and to determine if they were interested in participating. If yes, an interview date was scheduled. I also sent my interview guide (see appendices III and IV) ahead of time to the participants, so they could better prepare for the interview. As there are no hidden traps in my study, my supervisor and I believed it would be to my advantage to share my interview guide. When necessary, certain questions were also asked directly to the interviewees via email, to ensure their admissibility to my study.

#### 4.1.3. Justification of the chosen participants

For my study, I chose six SMEs and six NSMEs, for a total of twelve businesses (see Figure 4.1.3). I chose my sample based on numerous criterion. The first one was that the business needed to host or attend at least one marketing event per year; in some cases, firms both hosted and attended events. The second, was the size of the business. According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (2016b), a small enterprise is comprised of 1-99 employees and a medium enterprise of 100-499 employees; these are recognized as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Therefore, all chosen businesses needed to have at least one employee and a maximum of 499. The third criteria was the growth stage of the business, which enabled me to categorize it as an SME or a NSME. If the company was still in an early growth or seed/start-up phase, where customer acquisition was key, it fell under the NSME category. Otherwise, all other businesses fell under the SME category, which did include some businesses which were also in a growth phase (but not under the early pressures of customer acquisitions), all the way to mature companies.

Once these three criteria had been met, it was important to obtain an interview with the person in charge of events for that business. This criterion was essential, as I wanted to understand how event marketing was managed and conducted, by the person in charge of events. To make sure these criteria were respected, I asked the managers that I was in touch with via email to confirm these points. This is how I was able to determine which companies were a good fit for my study and which were not.

In terms of the sample size, it was finalized near the end of the interviews I conducted, as I was using the principle of saturation; to stop conducting interviews once the answers began to be very similar. Therefore, I would like to highlight the fact that for this research, my relatively small sample size is not considered as an obstacle to my research. In fact, as supported by the teachings of d'Astous (2015), qualitative research does not require a random selection representative of the population, but rather, a sample based on the congruence of the chosen individuals who will provide pertinent content, rather than content which is representative of the entire population.

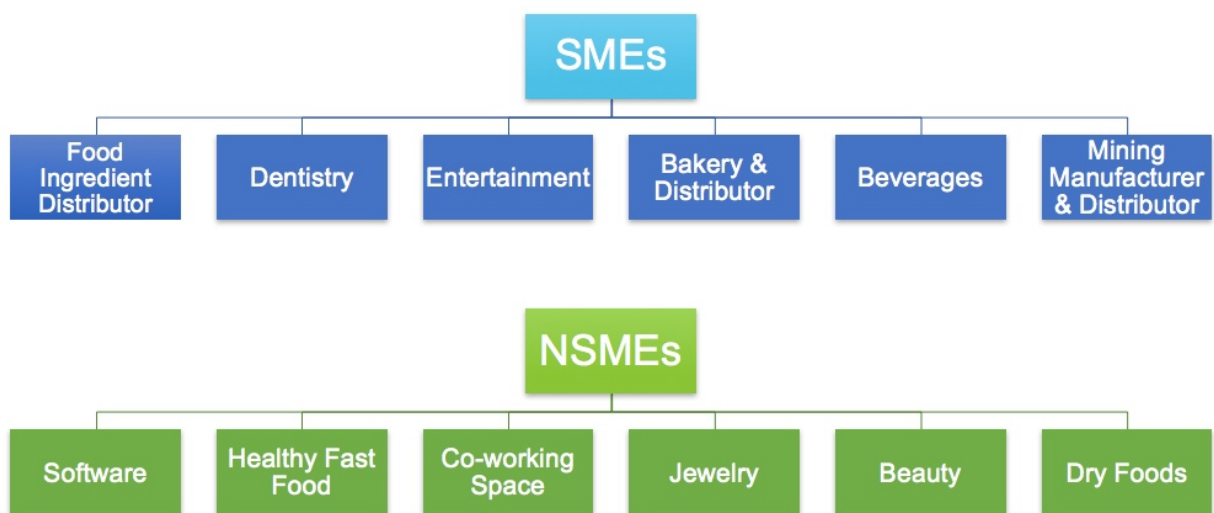


Figure 4.1.3: Presentation of the twelve SMEs and NSMEs

#### 4.1.4. Presentation of the participants

Figure 4.1.3 presents the twelve participating SMEs and NSMEs, by industry/activity sector. Table 4.1.4a represents the twelve businesses and the managers that I interviewed for my study. Interviewees and businesses are presented on an anonymous basis, starting with company information like: SME or NSME, industry/sector, number of employees, year of establishment and location. As for the interviewee information, this includes: the employee's role at the company and the duration of their employment. Then, I have some information on the context of the interviews, which is: the date the interview took place and the location. Lastly, I have used "P#" as the reference point for each participant, since this is an anonymous study. Participants shall only be referred to by their Participant number, as well as by the title they have chosen to give me. Businesses will only be referred to by the industry/activity sector that the interviewee chose to give. Table 4.1.4b represents the twelve businesses that I interviewed for my study, but also includes the number of events they hosted per year, by event type (hosted vs. attended). It is interesting to note that one of the participants, Participant 6, hosted and attended more than 400 events per year. This is explained by the nature of the industry Participant 6 operates in and the types of events they attend and host. For example, very simple events, which are not relevant for other participants to partake in or organize, make up the core of this number. In terms of comparable events to the ones of the other participants, Participant 6 attends and hosts at most 52 per year. It is also important to note that the nature of the industry Participant 6 is in, the entertainment industry, forms one of the main services they provide (entertainment service) which are all considered as events. It will be interesting to see if this has an impact on my results.



Participant Number	SME or NSME	Industry / Sector	Number of Employees	Year of Establishment	Company Location	Employee Interviewed	Duration of Employment	Date of Interview	Location of Meeting
P1	NSME	Software	24	October 2014	Montreal	Former Marketing Manager (currently in a new role)	2+ years as Marketing Manager	March 2017	Montreal
P2	SME	Food Ingredient Distributor	90	1918 (purchased in 2000)	Montreal	President	17 years (since purchasing)	March 2017	Email
P3	NSME	Healthy Fast Food	15	February 2016	Montreal	Marketing Manager	1.5 years	April 2017	Montreal
P4	NSME	Coworking space	7	November 2015	Montreal	Marketing & Sales Director	> 1 year	April 2017	Montreal
P5	SME	Dentistry	30	1989	Montreal	Marketing Coordinator	1.5 years	May 2017	Skype interview
P6	SME	Entertainment	100	2012	Montreal	Director of Development (Founder)	5+ years	May 2017	Montreal
P7	NSME	Jewelry	5	2014	Montreal	Marketing Coordinator (Social Media Coordinator & Founder-Designer)	2+ years	May 2017	Montreal
P8	SME	Bakery & Distributor	4	1985 (purchased in 2013)	Montreal	President	4 years (since purchasing)	May 2017	Montreal
P9	NSME	Beauty	2	2016	Montreal	Co-founder	1 year (since opening)	May 2017	Montreal
P10	NSME	Dry Foods	4	2016	Montreal	Co-founder & CEO	1.5 years (since opening)	May 2017	Skype interview
P11	SME	Beverages	100	2008	Montreal	Marketing Coordinator	> 1 year	May 2017	Skype interview
P12	SME	Mining Manufacturer & Distributor	130	1977	Montreal	Former Marketing & Sales Director	11 years	May 2017	Skype interview

Table 4.1.4a: Description of the participating businesses and managers

Participant Number	SME or NSME	# of Total Events / Year	# of Hosted Events / Year	# of Attended Events / Year
P1	NSME	6-10	0	6-10
P2	SME	12	0	12
P3	NSME	3	3	0
P4	NSME	24	24	0
P5	SME	6	6	0
P6	SME	405	400	5
P7	NSME	3	2	1
P8	SME	17-23	14-20	3
P9	NSME	37	22	15
P10	NSME	5	1	4
P11	SME	120	0	120
P12	SME	16	10	6

Table 4.1.4b: Description of the participating businesses and their marketing events

## 4.2. Data collection

The data collection consisted of many steps and was done with one group of participants: managers responsible for event marketing. The data collection with company employees took place between March and May 2017; however, the majority took place in the month of May. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, with an average duration time of 40 to 60 minutes. There was one exception to this, where one respondent answered the interview guide questions via email and all follow-up questions by email as well. The choice for the location of the interviews was left to the discretion of the interviewees, as I wanted them to choose a place which was most convenient for them and where they would feel comfortable. Therefore, most of the in-person interviews were conducted at the interviewee's workplace, except for one which took place in a café in Montreal. All interviews were voice recorded and transcribed afterwards.

An interview guide was also used (see appendices III and IV). The interview guide was adapted to address businesses who only hosted events, businesses who only attended events and those who both hosted and attended events. The interview guide was divided into three parts: the general information about the business and the marketing event manager, marketing within the company and events within the company. The first part of the interview guide was developed to put the participants at ease, by answering very simple questions about their firm and what it did. It is also in this section that I was curious to gather more information on my participants' backgrounds, in order to determine the role they played with the management of their events. The second part of the interview focused on marketing within the firm, to better understand the types of marketing activities in which they took part, to determine their marketing objectives and to be able to compare these to the events objectives. The last part of the interview focused on event marketing within the firm; this is where the bulk of my data came from. Some of the questions were on the following topics: the objectives of event marketing, the event marketing planning process, the types of event marketing platforms chosen, the evaluation process and more.

It is also important to note that post-interview, in some cases, it was necessary to re-communicate by email with the participants, to further dig into certain topics. The entire data collection process took three months.

## 4.3. Ethics

Ethics always play an important role once human participants are involved. That is why I created a consent form for my study, which was sent out to all participants which accepted to be interviewed. The consent form had two goals: to obtain the interviewee's consent to reveal their title at their company, which I would then use in my paper, as well as their consent for our interview to be recorded, so that I could transcribe the results. The consent form also allowed participants to be reassured as to the nature of the study and to feel confident that no sensitive information would be divulged. Throughout the process and at any time, any of the interviewees could have contacted either myself or my thesis supervisor for further information on my study, as well as the Ethics Research Committee at HEC Montreal.



#### 4.4. Analysis method

The analysis consists of making sense of all the data collected and to demonstrate how it addresses my research questions. As I have multiple research questions and two different contexts, that is how I have chosen to analyze my results: first by context and second by research question. More precisely, this means that I will begin by analyzing the data I collected from my SME participants and analyze them by research question. I will then proceed to do the same for my NSME participants. To answer my seventh research question, on the distinctions and similarities between SMEs and NSMEs, this will be done in a third section in my results and discussion section.

The first step was to create a coding chart (see appendix V) based on my research questions, my interview guide and my literature review. After each interview, I did a primary analysis of the results and filled in my coding chart, which allowed me to detect certain patterns in the answers and to dig deeper on certain topics. In the end, I was able to code all my respondents' answers in this chart and to determine when saturation had been met in terms of the results. The objective of my coding chart was to classify all the information on hand into different categories pertaining to my different research questions. From there, I was able to observe homogeneity and heterogeneity between results, which I have analyzed in the following section, as well as discuss the various implications of these results.

### 5. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results analysis and discussion of my research findings. Throughout the data collected during the interviews, many results emerged concerning the event marketing practices of both SMEs and NSMEs. Thus, this section has been divided into three parts; first, showing the results by research question for SMEs; second, the results by research question of the NSMEs and finally, a comparison between SME and NSME results. For each section, I will begin by addressing the Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP), followed by the event marketing practices and finishing off with the event marketing manager's role. My last research question, the difference between an SME and a NSME's event marketing practices, will be addressed in the third section only.

#### 5.1. SME Results and Discussion: The Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP)

My first research question was to determine whether or not SMEs have a formal event marketing planning process and if so, if they need one in order to execute their marketing events. In order to answer this question, I developed the Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP) model, which was adapted from Crowther's (2011) research and consists of five components: Objectives, Design, Delivery, Evaluation and the Marketing Event Manager's Role. From the SMEs that I interviewed, none had an EMPP model like the one I had developed. However, most had their own form of an EMPP, which was unique to their event marketing needs. This is

consistent with marketing planning and event marketing literature, which stipulates that having a planning process can improve the performance of the firm (Whalen & Boush, 2014). With that being said, a couple of the participants did not have an EMPP, for different reasons. This was explained through the way their event department operated or by the difference in event types hosted and attended. For Participant 11, it was more of a day-by-day process and an event-by-event process. For Participant 12, it was a whole different story. She even admitted to not having an EMPP at all, because of the uniqueness of her events and the impossibility to implement a standard process for all of her events:

« ...bein, non, j'te dirais, on a essayé ça [avoir un processus de planification d'événements] mais on ne l'a pas mis en place, **parce que ça ne marchait pas vraiment parce que finalement c'est tellement de niche, il y a tant de trade shows... que j'te dirais qu'on avait pas quelque chose de ferme [pour tous nos événements].**” – Participant 12

For Participant 5, although she had her own form of an EMPP, she believed that it could be improved and wanted it to be standardized.

On this note, many of the SMEs claimed to have an informal EMPP, versus a formal one. As per my EMPP, the first step is to choose the objectives of the marketing event, before choosing anything else. It was interesting to note that the major difference between the interviewed SMEs' EMPP and my EMPP model, was the fact that those SMEs did not begin the EMPP with the objectives, but rather, with the event platform choice. This point is not in line with marketing planning and event marketing literature, where authors argue that the event objectives must and should come first, as this constitutes the reasons for which a firm will choose to utilize event marketing, as part of their marketing strategy (Getz, 2007). According to Wilson (2004) this is the most important step in the EMPP, as it sets the tone for the overall process and should reflect the firm's mission. With that said, it is important to note that although the SMEs said they began their EMPP with the event platform choice first and not the event objectives, event objectives were considered during the event platform choice process and were dependent of them. When considering an event platform, if the event platform did not align with the event objectives, it was rejected.

To answer my first research question, the majority of my interviewed SMEs did in fact have some form of an EMPP; this leads me to believe that SMEs should have an EMPP. Having an EMPP can allow the event manager to be more organized and to better manage all aspects of their events. There is however an exception to this, which is demonstrated by one of the SMEs that did not have an EMPP, as the portfolio of events that they organize and attend were too different and varied to have one standardized EMPP.

## 5.2. SME Results and Discussion: Marketing Events Objectives

My second research question was to determine why SMEs choose to use marketing events. For all SMEs, this was directly linked to objectives; what the marketing events could accomplish

for them, in terms of attaining these objectives. Events were said to be of a moderate to high importance by the SMEs, as they allowed them to achieve one or more marketing objectives; this is consistent with prior research conducted on marketing event objectives. Some of these objectives, which were mentioned by participants in my study and also researched by other authors, include: increase sales (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2011; Gupta, 2003; Reijonen, 2010; Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005), increase brand awareness (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2011; Johnson, 2008; Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005), develop relationships (Reijonen, 2010), strengthen existing relationships (Crowther, 2011), improve brand image (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2011; Sneath et al., 2005), build a clientele basis (Reijonen, 2010) and more. In fact, many SMEs claimed that events played a very important role in their firm, for various reasons. For example, Participant 6 chose to host one particular event, as it allowed him to attain three of his company's objectives (increase the number of clients, sell his product and to stimulate the community/sharing with others):

“Je rempli le bar quand c'est vide... et je vais vendre des extensions de mon [produit] que je veux commercialiser. Alors **avec un événement, je remplis trois objectifs de ma compagnie, c'est exactement ça que je veux**. Alors c'est pour ça que, **quand qu'on a eu l'idée, on a fait « oh shit, wow, on va le faire » tsé, parce que c'est trop bon.**” – Participant 6

When asked about the general importance of events for his SME, Participant 6 started off by saying that events were quite important and then went into more details and finally admitted that events were very important for his business, as they make up one of the core services that his business offers:

“ [Intervieweur : puis c'est quoi le niveau d'importance qui est attribué aux événements ici ?] **C'est assez important**. Ça dépend de, mon autre partenaire il dirait que c'est un paquet de trouble les événements, parce qu'on en fait beaucoup, **mais c'est énorme [les événements]** ... mais c'est particulier, parce **qu'on a un domaine où ça nécessite des événements**. Pour jouer, faut se rassembler. Donc c'est pour ça qu'on est tout le temps dans les événements, sauf que, tous les jours, ouvrir le bar, c'est un événement. On prépare un party à tous les jours. Alors on est tout le temps en événement, en quelque sorte, on est tout le temps en show. Alors pour nous, ça c'est super facile parce que après quand qu'on réfléchit à quelque chose, faut juste changer un peu la formule, qu'on fait déjà de toute façon à tous les jours. Alors ça c'est un bon avantage qu'on a, puis **oui dans ce cas-là, effectivement, c'est très important [les événements]**.” – Participant 6

For some of the other SMEs, like Participant 11, she claimed events to be very important for several reasons. In fact, the reasons she gave were part of the SME's objectives with regards to events: “[Intervieweur : quel niveau d'importance est attribué aux événements dans la compagnie ?] Je dirais que **c'est très important**, parce que **c'est clairement une des façons pour nous d'être visibles, d'être vus, d'être connus.**” As another example, Participant 12 hosted and

attended a variety of events, as it was part of her SME's product launch strategy, thus helping the SME attain its objectives. When asked about the importance of events, Participant 12 said they were extremely important, due to the nature of her SME's business:

**“C’est extrêmement, extrêmement important [les événements], parce que, je pense que dans une industrie très niche, de niche en B2B, les événements c’est vraiment vraiment important parce que les gens ont comme besoin de se voir, de partager, d’échanger. C’est comme une des places où t’es vraiment, t’es « front office » toi t’es avec les clients, les clients pour [nom de la compagnie], il y en avait 600 maximum mondialement, genre 300 au Canada, je connaissais tous mes clients là, 300 personnes c’est pas si difficile à connaître, alors si on parle de clients en termes de, le CEO de la compagnie, c’est eux que tu rencontrais. Alors je te dirais, c’était très très important [les événements]” – Participant 12.**

In terms of these marketing events objectives, although there was some homogeneity, they varied greatly by SME. Objectives varied the most for hosted events than for attended events. This can be explained by the fact that SMEs mostly only attended trade show type events, whereas for their hosted events, these could range from Christmas parties to mini conferences and from bar nights to client conferences (i.e. there was more event type variety with hosted events than with attended events). Therefore, we can conclude that objectives to attending events were quite consistent amongst the SMEs and included: sales related, customer acquisition, customer related and product development related objectives. For the hosted events, the only common objectives were customer acquisition and promotional related objectives. It was interesting to note that for the SMEs which took part in both hosting and attending events, the objectives were rather consistent. This demonstrates that their event marketing initiatives all have the same objectives and goals.

To conclude, the objective of my second research question was to determine why SMEs choose to use marketing events. From my SME results analysis, I can conclude that SMEs mainly choose to use event marketing, as they believe it is one of the best, if not the best way for them to achieve one or more of their event objectives. The most common objectives for attended events are: sales, customer acquisition and product development objectives, whereas for hosted events they are: customer acquisition and promotional objectives.

### 5.3. SME Results and Discussion: Management of Marketing Events

My third research question was to determine how SMEs manage their marketing events. This proved to be a challenging question, as various questions needed to be asked of the participants, in order to understand how they manage their marketing events. The aspects which I have used to address this question are the themes which emerged from my initial data analysis: the marketing events decisions, the choices behind the chosen marketing events, budget management, challenges related to hosting and/or attending events and means of communications for the marketing events.

### 5.3.1. SME Marketing Events Decisions

To begin with the first aspect, the marketing events decisions, it turns out that in almost all cases, the planning and strategy of marketing events was done with a team and based on a predetermined events calendar. In general, this team was not made up of dedicated marketing events employees; rather, it was composed of employees within the company with various backgrounds and skills. Not having a dedicated team of event marketing employees reflects one of the many struggles of a SME, which is limited (human) resources (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Carson & Cromie, 1990; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011; O'Donnell, 2011). It was also interesting to note that for the SMEs, events were often times managed and chosen by a high-level executive, such as a founder, owner or president, even in cases where there was a dedicated events marketing employee. As an example of this, we have Participant 11:

“C’est sûr que ce n’est pas moi qui, disons, donne le dernier mot non plus sur tous les événements. Moi je m’occupe surtout des commandites, **mais pour ce qui est des grosses foires, surtout les grosses foires B2B, ça touche vraiment le président, les directeurs, l’équipe des ventes et les représentants.**” – Participant 11

We also have Participant 5, who said that : “**Ce n’est pas moi qui les choisis [les événements], c’est vraiment... ça va vraiment être les [propriétaires de la compagnie] qui vont comme faire, ok, c’est quoi qu’on croit qui va être le plus intéressant, qu’est-ce qui est plus populaire dans le domaine en ce moment...**”.

This is consistent with SME entrepreneurial marketing literature, which shows that “entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur” (Gilmore, 2011). This implies that the entrepreneur (i.e. the business owner) is the person leading the marketing initiatives, which is what my research has reflected with regards to event marketing initiatives. To continue on this topic, marketing events had to be approved by higher level management for all SMEs. Some SMEs also worked with sponsors and/or partners for their events, which is also consistent with popular event marketing literature on sponsorships (Park & Park, 2017; Van Niekerk, 2017), in order to have a larger budget and to treat their attendees:

“Oui. Nous autres on allait chercher des commanditaires... entre autres, le plus gros événement, on avait des commanditaires, c’était [pour] notre conférence internationale... on allait chercher quelque chose comme 100,000\$ en commandites, j’tu dit c’était vraiment bon, **et puis ça nous faisait un budget, écoute, de malade.** On avait des cadeaux, c’était vraiment cool. **Les gens étaient très très très, très gâtés dans ces conférences-là, à cause des commandites qu’on allait chercher.** [Alors] c’était le fun pour tout le monde... **[c’était important de gâter les clients] pour que leur expérience soit positive, pour que, pour que ça soit comme un, tsé on voulait vraiment créer des événements, des conférences, c’était vraiment un événement d’échange,**

**de convivialité, c'était aussi un cadeau en même temps, c'était une récompense de pouvoir assister à cette conférence-là, ... c'était vraiment génial."**

As well, many SMEs revealed that they often took part in trial and error with regards to their marketing events, which is consistent with literature. According to Parrott et al. (2010), "assuming, guessing and making gut-feel decisions" with regards to their marketing events is normal, because there is a lack of "specific, tailored [marketing] guidelines" (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010) for SMEs. Therefore, SMEs have no other choice but to make assumptions, guesses and gut-feel decisions, when it comes to marketing events. For these SMEs, they were willing to take risks, if they saw a profitable outcome on the other end. For Participant 8, she would try something out and pay for it and if she did not like it or if it brought her nothing, she would not pay for it again: "[en parlant de quelques-unes de ses dépenses en événementiel]... **c'est des choses des fois que j'essaie la première fois, puis si c'est pas à mon goût ou si c'est pas quelque chose qui m'a rapporté, je coupe dans ce temps-là.**" The same goes for Participant 6, who was more or less willing to try anything out, with regards to events, to see whether or not it was worth it, as it was part of their business mentality. This makes sense, as they host and attend so many events during a year, that there is less risk for them to try another similar event:

"Pour la soirée [nom de l'événement], une façon qu'on a fait de la promotion avec depuis une semaine, il y a une application qui s'appelle « Friends N Go » ... **on regarde si ça fonctionne**, on a payé pour un certain nombre de publicités avec lui dans son application, **on va voir s'il y a un impact là. On est toujours ouvert comme ça**, mais on n'a pas besoin de ça, **si ça nous emmène plus de clients c'est super, sinon, on va juste dire non [après l'avoir essayé] ... [on l'a fait] pour voir si ça fonctionne.** D'un coup que ça emmène dix clients de plus par semaine, on va les prendre. [Intervieweur : Dans le fond, tu aimes essayer des choses différentes, voir si ça va marcher, c'est un peu la même chose avec les événements, « trial and error »] Oui vraiment beaucoup. En fait ça c'est une mentalité qu'on a beaucoup à l'intérieur c'est ça qu'on commence quelque chose de petit, pis on le grossi à mesure... on veut pouvoir ajuster et modifier, parce qu'on va faire des erreurs, c'est sûr. Alors on aime mieux commencer petit et que ça soit beau et que ça soit le fun, que trop gros et mal organisé et trop cher. [Intervieweur : Alors si moi je t'approchais demain matin et je te disais « Ah j'ai eu cette idée de faire un événement avec ta compagnie, etc. Toi tu m'écouterais et si ça faisait du sens t'embarquerais ?] Oui... si tu me dis que « j'ai un événement et je veux utiliser ton bar, on va être 100 personnes » bein c'est beau. C'est super facile à organiser, j'vais t'ouvrir mon bar et tu viendras" – Participant 6.

It was also very interesting to note that only one of the SMEs, Participant 6, had dedicated events teams, as they host and attend more than 400 marketing events of all shapes and sizes, per year. What was even more interesting is that that SME did not even have a dedicated event marketing manager; it was one of the co-founders who was in charge of marketing and events, as it fell under his business development tasks.

### 5.3.2. SME Choices Behind Chosen Marketing Events

The second aspect includes the choices behind the chosen marketing events. Similarly to the objectives of marketing events, not much consensus was obtained here either. For hosted events, some of the SMEs claimed that marketing events were chosen, as they were the best marketing platform to reach potential clients and thus achieve their event objectives. This is consistent with event marketing literature, which stipulates that marketing events are gaining in popularity, as the more traditional marketing communications tools are becoming less efficient (Hede & Kellett, 2011). In a world where there are so many advertisements and mediums to reach consumers nowadays, businesses need to choose carefully which marketing activities they will use and how they will showcase their offerings to consumers.

For example, Participant 5 explained to me that in order to reach her firm's objectives, they had no other form of marketing to turn to but events, as the more traditional forms of marketing did not work with their targeted event attendees:

**“Bein c’est parce que yo les [partenaires d’affaires (qui sont les invités principaux aux événements)] ont pas le temps là. So si tu ne leurs donnes pas comme... il y a aucun autre moyen [que les événements] pour que tu puisses les rejoindre. Ce n’est pas le marketing pur qui va faire que [tu vas pouvoir les rejoindre], quand je dis marketing pur, c’est pas genre en envoyant un courriel, c’est pas en leurs donnant un cadeau, blah blah blah, que tu vas comme, que tu vas être capable de les rejoindre genre. Comme, c’est en les invitants dans quelque chose qu’eux vont être intéressés, pis qui va leur donner de la valeur.”** – Participant 5

For Participant 6, some of his event choices were all about consistency over the years and satisfying his clients' expectations with regards to certain events. Since their clients loved one of the events they hosted, they held it annually in order to please them. This practice is quite common with other large events, such as music festivals, which tend to happen year after year. This in turn allowed him to have a better control over these events, as he knew what to expect out of them and how to easily put them together:

**“...Alors c’est deux gros événements là, on a à peu près 300 personnes qui viennent... ça c’est très populaire, il y a toujours un gros line-up immense... on a lancé l’événement mardi [il y a trois jours] cette semaine et il y a déjà 300 personnes qui sont « attending » dans l’événement [sur Facebook]. Ça c’est parce que les gens le savent, c’t’une constance, ils savent que ça va être là, ils attendent l’événement, ils s’inscrivent dessus, et c’est super facile. C’est ça qui est intéressant, de créer cette constance là à travers les années, donc on a moins en moins de questions à se poser sur les événements à venir, parce qu’on fait de plus en plus les mêmes choses. Et la « crowd » qui vient est toujours la même, ça c’est super rassurant, parce que t’as fini de chercher ton public, t’as finis de chercher tes idées, tu les appliques. Ça c’est le fun. Parce qu’on**



a plus de recette, on a plus besoin de créer des recettes, les recettes sont créées... on a notre public et on fait des événements qui intéresse notre public.” – Participant 6

For attended events, there was much more insight given by the SMEs as well as more consensus, as the SMEs attended more events than they hosted events. Many SMEs claimed that their attendance was based on a past positive attendance and their non-attendance was based on a past negative attendance. Mixed results were obtained in terms of exhibiting at an event for the first time, were some SMEs preferred to exhibit for the first time and other SMEs preferred to visit the event for the first time. The SMEs who preferred to exhibit for the first time, were in line with the “trial and error” trend demonstrated earlier on. Participant 12 is an example of an SME who preferred to first visit a trade show, in order to assess whether or not it was worth exhibiting the following year. This assessment was done based on the attendance at the event in terms of visitors and other exhibitors. It was also interesting to note that one of the SMEs mostly only visited events, without ever exhibiting at them, as those trade shows were of some interest to him and his business, but not of a big enough interest to invest as an exhibitor. Even more interesting was the fact that one of the SMEs claimed to attend one particular trade show almost by obligation, as this event plays a huge role in her SME’s industry and is one of the most important ones:

“ [Intervieweur : puis comment vous faites pour choisir les événements dans lesquels vous allez participer?] Pour le moment c’est encore, étant donné qu’on est une petite entreprise encore, **il y a des événements pour lesquels notre participation on la considère essentielle.** Donc par exemple, je pense aux événements B2B, aux foires, on a le SIAL, donc le Salon international de l’alimentation, il y en a un par année... puis c’est le plus gros salon d’innovation en termes d’alimentation. **Donc, pour nous étant donné que le [nom du produit qu’ils vendent] c’est quand même un produit innovateur et assez nouveau aussi... c’est sûr que pour nous c’est essentiel d’aller là,** on regarde ça dans cette optique-là.”

### 5.3.3. SME Management of the Event Marketing Budget

The third aspect was related to the management of the event marketing budget. It was surprising to discover that half of the SMEs had a marketing events budget and that half did not have one. In any business, marketing budgeting should play an important role, as it guides you in terms of your objectives and how to accomplish them. Participant 12 touched upon this, when she told us that her event marketing budget was dependent upon sales of the business; that if sales were down, they had to cut the budget and vice-versa. With that being said, budget management is not mentioned in any part of Crowther’s (2011) EMPP model. As well, for the SMEs which claimed to not have an event marketing budget, they did, however, operate on a "maximum amount of money to be spent" basis or a “assess event by event” basis, which leads us back to this “trial and error” mentality:



“ [Intervieweur : puis as-tu un budget pour l'événementiel ?] Non [rires]. **On a bien de la misère avec ça [avoir un budget événementiel]**. On n'a pas de, on y va au « feeling », on essaie que tous les événements soient rentables, dans le sens que, dans les bars<sup>1</sup>, les événements sont faits pour augmenter les revenus de la soirée. Alors si c'est plus le cas, si ça coûte plus cher, on va annuler la soirée.” – Participant 6

In terms of the management of this event marketing budget, almost in all cases, the budget was managed by the higher-level executive, even when there was a dedicated event marketing manager. This is another example of entrepreneurial marketing being driven by the entrepreneur (Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011).

#### 5.3.4. SME Challenges with Organizing Marketing Events

The fourth aspect took into consideration the challenges related to organizing events. All of the SMEs claimed to have internal challenges to deal with, where some also claimed to have external challenges to deal with as well. However, none of the SMEs expressed having solely external challenges to deal with. This is important to note, as it shows that SMEs have great struggles to deal with within the walls of their own businesses, rather than outside of it. The internal challenges included mainly: finding the time to organize marketing events and developing communication strategies in order to promote their events. The fact that the SMEs claimed to require more time in order to organize their events, is consistent with SME literature which cites “time” as one of the major limitations of an SME (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Carson & Cromie, 1990; Reijonen, 2010). The difficulty to develop communication strategies in order to promote their events is also consistent with previous SME marketing literature, which demonstrates that SMEs underutilize marketing activities (Carson & Cromie, 1990; Cheng, Lourenço & Resnick, 2016; Fillis, 2012; O'Donnell, 2011; Parrott, Roomi & Holliman, 2010; Reijonen, 2010), as there are scarcely any marketing guidelines tailored for SMEs, for them to consult and put into practice (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010).

In terms of the external challenges, these mainly revolved around the fact that it was difficult to get people to attend their events. As mentioned, some SMEs expressed having both internal and external challenges, as demonstrated by Participant 6's internal (communications strategy) and external (getting people to attend his events) challenges:

“ [Intervieweur: puis les défis reliés à l'organisation d'événements c'est...?] **La rentabilité... pis quand même, les stratégies de communications, de façon à créer l'accroche qui va faire que tes participants vont venir**. Parce que, deux événements sur deux années différentes, une année ça marche bien et une année ça marche pas bien, **puis des fois c'est juste**

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of Participant 6's business sectors for his SME

**le post Facebook qui était mal écrit là.** Pis t'es comme « ah sack », t'as passé à côté ostie, ça fait chier, alors des fois c'est aussi de se rappeler que, en faisant quelques messages un peu par-là dans les réseaux et sur d'autres réseaux sociaux, on peut aller chercher plus de monde, mais c'est parce que **on va aller chercher la niche.** Puis il y a beaucoup de choses nous autres, que **les gens sont passionnés de ce [produit]-là, si tu vas écrire au bon endroit, tu vas poigner tous les passionnés d'une « shot », ça prit dix minutes et t'as fait ta job.**” – Participant 6

Participant 5 also experienced very similar challenges, with regards to communications but also with the actual organization of events, as she does it alone:

“ [Intervieweur : puis c'est quoi les défis qui sont reliés à l'organisation d'événements ?] ... **Être capable d'organiser ça toute seule** [rires]. Bein des fois c'est **rejoindre les [partenaires d'affaires / les invités principaux aux événements], je trouve que c'est difficile,** je trouve que des fois comme, c'est fou comment tu peux leurs envoyer des courriels, pis qu'ils ne réalisent même pas, ils vont l'ouvrir après. Donc c'est hyper difficile et c'est de savoir, est-ce que trois c'est trop ? Est-ce que trois c'est pass assez ? Comme, c'est vraiment de comme « gager » ça je trouve. **C'est d'aller les [partenaires d'affaires / les invités principaux aux événements] rejoindre qui est difficile.**” – Participant 5

The same applied to Participant 12, whose struggles were both internal and external when it came to her hosted events. The internal challenges revolved around the difficulty to rally the employees of the firm and get them to execute specific event related tasks, where the external challenges were attendee related, who sometimes did not show up to events:

“Les défis c'était souvent comme le respect de ce qui était proposé dans l'horaire là, des fois, on demandait aux gens d'être présents, **on demandait au staff de faire certains travaux, puis ils ne les faisaient pas... très très difficile. Le monde qui se saoulaient trop, qui n'étaient pas là, « didn't show up » ça arrivait beaucoup.** Et **faire venir les gens là, ça c'était pour nos « Lunch & Learn<sup>2</sup> », ça c'était vraiment vraiment vraiment crucial.** Parce que écoute, il y avait tellement d'argent qui était dépensé, puis là, si tu n'arrivais pas à faire venir du monde, **c'était vu, puis on a déjà eu des échecs là monumental. C'est très gênant de faire un « Lunch & Learn » où il y a [seulement] cinq personnes,** puis j'avais quand même beaucoup de « RSVP » puis il y avait seulement cinq personnes, **c'est même gênant pour les invités.** Tsé ils sont comme « bein qu'est-ce que je fais-moi ici ? ». Après ça ce n'est plus jamais arrivé là, on a vraiment compris qu'il fallait, même si le monde « RSVP » la veille faut tout appeler les « RSVP » [et confirmer avec eux qu'ils seront là].” – Participant 12

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<sup>2</sup> Type of event that Participant 12's SME hosted

For Participant 11, her challenges were solely internal. She stated that her greatest challenge was the fact that she was the only employee working on events, just like Participant 5. Otherwise, in terms of specific SME challenges, here too, not much consensus was obtained with regards to challenges, as each SME seemed to have their own unique challenges.

#### 5.3.5. SME Marketing Events and Communication Channels

The fifth and final aspect took into consideration the various means of communications used by SMEs, for the promotion of their marketing events. A few of the SMEs previously stated as part of their challenges that communications play an important role in getting clients and potential clients to attend events, as previously mentioned by Participant 5, Participant 6 and Participant 12. The most common way to communicate to event attendees was through social media, as well as personal email communications and through direct phone calls. For Participant 12, it was important to make direct phone calls to her clients, in order to ensure they would attend her events: “[on contactait nos clients par] téléphone direct... on appelait du monde pas mal, parce que **moi je pense que si tu veux créer un événement et que tu veux que le monde vienne, faut que t’es appelle**”. Some of the SMEs also relied upon word of mouth (WOM), in order to spread the word.

To conclude, the objective of my third research question was to determine how SMEs manage their marketing events. My goal in answering this question was not to give a simple black or white answer, but rather, to give insight on the management of event marketing, practiced by SMEs. The overall and main finding is that SMEs take part in a great amount of trial and error when it comes to the management of their events, and this, as previously discussed, is due to several reasons. These reasons include but are not limited to: lack of SME marketing guidelines, limitations in terms of resources (i.e. financial and human resources) and being willing to take risks and chances with the potential for high rewards. In terms of the actual management team for events, SMEs seemed to be well staffed, although there was room for more event employees. As well, high-level executives seemed to exercise a great amount of control and direction over their events, although they did not necessarily have any event marketing experience and/or knowledge. Events were a popular choice for SMEs, as they felt it was one of the best ways to reach consumers and thus to achieve their firm specific objectives. As for the budget, not all SMEs had one. In terms of challenges, the most important one was getting clients and customers to attend events, which every SME was hard at work on, through various communications channels. Speaking of which, social media showed to be the most popular platform in reaching a larger number of people. Overall, it would seem that SMEs manage their events fairly well, but there are definitely some areas to be improved upon, such as budget management.

#### 5.4. SME Results and Discussion: Evaluation of Marketing Events

My fourth research question was to determine how SMEs evaluate their marketing events. In all cases, SMEs measured their marketing events and did so based on a set of predetermined event objectives. This is important and in line with previous research on the topic, where Brown,

Getz, Pettersson & Wallstam (2015) stress the importance of evaluation as it is “an essential management function of information gathering and feedback through which processes can be improved, goals more effectively attained, and by which organizations can learn and adapt”. In essence, if SMEs evaluate their events, this can help them to improve their event practices. SMEs not only took part in conducting an internal evaluation process, but also an external one, where they gathered mostly qualitative feedback from event attendees, in an informal setting. This is also consistent with Brown et al.’s (2015) research, who believe that it is important to conduct both internal and external event evaluation processes, in order to capture the perspectives of all stakeholders.

It was interesting to note that only in a few cases, the event objectives measured were congruent with the objectives of the event itself. However, in most cases, the event objectives measured were not congruent with the objectives of the event. Some SMEs had one or two measures and some SMEs had many. In the majority of the cases, even though SMEs claimed to have numerous objectives for their events, they often times only measured one or two of their said objectives, when it came time to evaluate their events. This can be attributed to the fact that many of the SMEs claimed that their evaluation process was not perfect and could use some improvement; measures of evaluation being one of them. For example, Participant 12 only mentioned sales related evaluation measures for her marketing events, when she had many more objectives in mind for her events: brand awareness, educational related, promotional related and customer related objectives. For Participant 12, sales objectives were the most important measure for her events, as they determined whether or not to attend an event again:

**“Après ça quand on décidait d’exposer, on mesurait sur le nombre de leads récupérés puis la qualité des leads. Tout était dans un système ou on comptabilisait ça puis on comptabilisait même trois mois plus tard, six mois plus tard, pour voir le nombre de ventes que ça avait généré. Puis si par exemple on avait mettons 20 leads qui avaient menés à des ventes de 400,000 [dollars], on y retournait l’année prochaine. Si on avait 4 leads qui avaient rien fait, « puit puit », bein on y allait pu.”** – Participant 12

In terms of measures of evaluation, these mostly revolved around: sales, customer and profitability related objectives. This is in line with the SMEs’ objectives, where sales and customers are the top two objectives. Almost in all cases, SMEs took part in gathering qualitative feedback from their event attendees, whether it be in a formal way through a survey, or an informal way via conversations with attendees or employees.

Marketing events were not only measured in terms of objectives, but also in terms of satisfaction, sources of dissatisfaction and changes made. In general, SMEs were satisfied with their overall marketing events outcomes. However, there were some sources of dissatisfaction, which mainly revolved around the attendees. SMEs complained that their number one source of dissatisfaction was the low attendance rate of current and potential clients, at events. Participant 12 also expressed concerns with regards to logistics and communications, from the event organizer

of the events they attended. In terms of changes made to marketing events, these revolved around logistical aspects for most of the SMEs. For Participant 6, changes were not often made to his events, as he was in a stable place with regards to his customers and events and so this made him very nervous when changes were suggested:

“ [Intervieweur : puis est-ce que vous êtes satisfaits avec les résultats [de vos événements] en général ?] Oui, oui oui, parce que sinon on ne ferait plus rien [rires]. **Maintenant on est rendu avec une certaine stabilité qui fait qu'on est super frileux de changer quelque chose. À chaque fois qu'on a une idée pour une nouvelle soirée, on est pas sûr, parce que la stabilité qu'on a là on l'aime beaucoup pis même affaire, si y faut changer quelque chose dans la soirée on est comme « [murmures d'hésitation] ah oui... es-tu sure... »** parce que on a comme récemment changé la formule du [nom d'un événement hebdomadaire]... on l'a changé de concept, [pour passer d'un concept à un autre] pis là ils ont passé tout l'hiver comme « [bruits d'hésitation] c'était tu une bonne idée... ? » pis là ça commence à marcher, le monde commence à aimer ça, « [bruits de soulagement] ».” – Participant 6

For other SMEs however, like Participant 5, because they were trying out new events, change was seen as a positive thing, where new things could be tried out and new changes could be brought about:

“ [Intervieweur : puis qu'est-ce que vous changeriez de vos expériences passées avec les événements ?] Il faut qu'on soit plus organisés plus tôt... puis on a beaucoup changé d'avis... « oh lui va être gratuit, lui ne va pas être gratuit » finalement, on a comme changé d'hôtel en plein milieu de l'année [Intervieweur : mais comment ça tous ces changements là ?] **Parce que c'est comme la première fois qu'il y avait pleins de choses qu'on voulait amener de différent**, puis c'est ça, c'est ça que ça fait. Donc on s'est comme réadapté pendant l'année, puis là on se réadapte encore.” – Participant 5

This brings us to the seven aspects of Brown et al.'s (2015) event marketing evaluation framework, which will enable us to further examine SMEs' event marketing evaluation practices. For the first step, the majority of SMEs took part in all three of the evaluation paradigms: positivism, interpretive and critical. As we can recall, the interpretative approach takes into consideration the stakeholders' view and tries to understand it before making any conclusions, which was conducted by the majority of the SMEs, through the collection of qualitative feedback from event attendees. As for the critical view, it is based on action research, where the aim of the evaluation process is to bring about changes to the marketing event. Although none of SMEs expressed this out loud, it was clear by the follow up questions and answers that sometimes changes were brought about and made based upon an initial evaluation. The third approach however, the positivism evaluation paradigm, was only used to a certain extent. Where all SMEs

took part in determining cause and effect based on quantitative measurements, especially for sales targets, none conducted any experimental designs.

The second aspect of the model consists of SMEs' reasons to evaluate their marketing events. For all SMEs, the main goal of evaluating their events was to determine if they were successful or not. Although Brown et al. (2015) name many more reasons, for the interviewed SMEs, reasons to evaluate were not pushed any further than to determine success or failure.

The third aspect of the model is evaluation. As mentioned, SMEs tended to evaluate their events in an informal setting, especially when getting feedback from stakeholders. Again, not much consideration was put into this step of the process.

In terms of the fourth aspect of the model, which is what to evaluate, SMEs were quite narrow-minded here as well and tended to stick to the very basics: their event operations.

The fifth aspect of the model is measures of evaluation, which showed much more variety and depth than some of the other aspects. The most popular measures of evaluation included: money-related measures, which, according to Wilson (2004), is logical as money is the indicator of success of an event and thus an obvious measure to use. Other measures also included: social and cultural measures.

The sixth aspect of the model is methods of evaluation. Here too, not much thought was put into choosing a method, where gathering very basic qualitative feedback from event attendees and crunching numbers based on sales objectives were the only two methods used. According to Brown et al. (2015), the method of evaluation used will depend on the evaluation paradigm that is chosen in the beginning, but this did not find itself to be true with the SMEs. They chose any methods of evaluation they wanted to, based not on their evaluation paradigms but rather, based on the reasons to evaluate their events.

The seventh and final aspect of the model is uses of the evaluation. In most cases, the SMEs did use what they had learned through the evaluation of their events, whether it be: logistical, event planning, bringing about improvements to their events or others.

As mentioned, my objective in choosing this evaluation model was not to test it out, but rather, to understand the various components of it and to determine whether the SMEs use some, all, or none of these measures. From the previous analysis, only a few of the seven aspects of Brown et al.'s (2015) framework were relevant and used by SMEs. The main ones were the reasons why SMEs choose to evaluate their events and what to evaluate. However simple and straightforward these choices may have been, it is what guided their evaluation process and generated results, which the SMEs could then choose to make use of or not. As for the remaining aspects, although they were not as important, they were still present in the choices that the SMEs made.

To answer my fourth research question on how SMEs evaluate their events, I believe that SMEs evaluate their events well, but that the overall event marketing evaluation processes has room for a lot of improvement. The things which are presently done well include: measuring marketing events based on a set of predetermined event objectives, conducting both an internal and an external evaluation process and measuring sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

However, there are many areas of improvement which include: reasons to evaluate, what to evaluate (measuring all of the event's objectives) and implementing more aspects from Brown et al.'s (2015) framework. Although it is important to measure the success of one's events, there are many more points to be evaluated as well. This limited evaluation process could be due to the fact that although these SMEs were more established than say, NSMEs, they could still be rather new at implementing event marketing initiatives or the people in charge could be rather unfamiliar with events as well.

### 5.5. SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing's Role Within the Overall Marketing Strategy

My fifth research question was to determine the role that event marketing plays within the overall marketing strategy. In order to answer this question, we must begin by understanding the role that marketing plays, its objectives and how these are accomplished, within SMEs. In the case of the SMEs, the results were mixed. In some cases, SMEs had dedicated marketing coordinators or managers in charge of marketing and events and in other cases, there was no dedicated marketing employee; rather, marketing was a part of the task list of someone with ownership of the business (i.e. founder, owner or president). As mentioned earlier and demonstrated through literature, this type of behaviour is typical within SMEs, as "entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur" (Gilmore, 2011). This implies that the entrepreneur (i.e. the business owner) is the person leading the marketing initiatives (Morrish, 2011). In two cases, there was an actual team of event and marketing employees (a marketing department in one case), with many employees in charge of marketing. For all other SMEs, there was but one employee tasked with marketing related activities. In most cases, marketing strategies and activities were not carried out alone and often times received support from other employees within the firm. As well, everything with regards to marketing was done internally, in almost all cases. This is probably due to the fact that SMEs have a limited budget, as demonstrated through literature and thus try and do everything internally in order to cut costs.

In terms of objectives with regards to marketing, consensus was found amongst the SMEs, as the main objective was brand related. SMEs claimed that one of the main roles of marketing was branding and went beyond just brand awareness, to encompass other brand elements such as brand strategy and brand image. The second most popular objectives included: customer acquisition, promotional and communicational objectives. Other objectives which received some consensus as to their importance included: sales and customer related objectives.

In terms of marketing activities and platforms chosen to accomplish the marketing objectives, the two undisputable platforms were marketing events (naturally, as hosting and/or attending marketing events was a pre-requisite in order to participate in my study) and social media. Other popular platforms and activities included: paid publicity, branding and advertising.

Now that we have analyzed these various components of the overall marketing strategy, we can make comparisons to the event marketing strategy, based on the objectives. First off, SMEs tended to have more objectives when it came to their marketing events, than to their overall

marketing strategy. With that being said, some of the most popular objectives from the marketing strategy – brand, customer acquisition and promotional objectives – were also present for the event marketing objectives. This goes to show that event marketing may not be considered as a part of the marketing strategy, but rather, as a strategy and activity on its own. This is contrary to event marketing literature, which demonstrates that event marketing is being used more and more, as the more traditional marketing and communication tools are becoming less efficient (Hede & Kellett, 2011). Event marketing represents an alternative to traditional advertising mediums (Crowther, 2010a; Gupta, 2003; Tafesse, 2016) and rests within the domains of the marketing strategy (Crowther, 2011).

Another important observation was the fact that one of the popular objectives from the marketing strategy, communications objectives, was not part of the marketing event related objectives. This shows that SMEs do not consider events to be an important communication platform, which also goes against the literature, where many authors consider event marketing to be a communication tool (Close et al., 2006; Crowther, 2010a; Crowther, 2010b; Gupta, 2003; Leischnig, Schwertfeger & Geigenmueller, 2011; Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013; Wood, 2009).

There were other similar inconsistencies, where a few of the SMEs claimed that relationship management and educational objectives were objectives for their marketing events, but of those few, not all claimed that they were objectives for their marketing objectives. Similarly, business development, charitable and product development objectives were objectives for their marketing events, but not at all for their marketing objectives. Again, this demonstrates that event marketing may not be considered as a part of the marketing strategy, but rather, as a strategy and activity on its own.

In essence, my research on SMEs, their overall marketing strategy and their event marketing practices tends to show that the two are not in synch and that the marketing events work on their own, independently from the overall marketing strategy. Therefore, the answer to my fifth research question would be that event marketing plays no role within the SMEs' overall marketing strategy; rather, it plays its own role, in parallel to the marketing strategy.

## 5.6. SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing Manager's Role

My sixth research question was to determine the impact that the event marketing manager has on the EMPP. This was represented by a fifth component that I added to my EMPP model, based on the literature review. In the case of the SMEs, the results were mixed. As previously mentioned, in some cases, SMEs had dedicated marketing coordinators or managers in charge of marketing and events. In other cases, there was no dedicated marketing or event employee in charge of events; rather, it was a part of the task list of someone with ownership of the business (i.e. founder, owner or president). As previously mentioned, it turns out that in almost all cases, the planning and strategy of marketing events was done with a team. In fact, Participant 2, and Participant 12 had a dedicated events team and Participant 6 had multiple dedicated events teams, as they organized more than 400 events per year. On the other hand, Participant 5, Participant 8



and Participant 11 were left alone to execute their events. It was also interesting to learn that in almost all cases, whether or not there was an employee in charge of marketing events, decisions with regards to events came from high level management, such as a founder, owner or president. Therefore, the event marketing employee's role was limited to executing the marketing events chosen by their superior. This was explained by Participant 11, who said that:

**“Bein en fait, c’est moi qui va le mener [l’événement]. Dans le fond, c’est pas moi qui prend nécessairement la décision d’y aller, mais par contre, dès qu’on décide d’aller dans un événement, c’est moi qui va réserver, qui va réserver le kiosque, qui va s’occuper de toute la poutine des détails, de gérer l’équipe sur place si nécessaire, donc : engager des agents de démo, c’est moi qui va regarder pour la logistique, pour emmener les stocks, quels stock on amène, avec qui, comment, tout ce qui est la livraison, l’horaire, donc vraiment de A à Z.”** – Participant 11

With that being said, in all cases, approvals with regards to events came from high level management.

In terms of the education background and work experience of the people in charge of marketing events for SMEs, the SMEs which had a dedicated marketing and events employee all had a marketing education from university. The SMEs which did not have a dedicated marketing and events employee, where someone with ownership was in charge, mostly did not have any formal marketing education. They did, however, at the very least have either a formal business education or relevant work experience with marketing, except for Participant 6. As well, it was interesting to note that none of the employees in charge of marketing events, whether it be a coordinator or an owner, had any formal event planning education.

In terms of relevant work experience, there were some interesting cases to note. For one of the SMEs, seeing as how Participant 12 had many years of experience with marketing and events (10+ years) and thus held a director role, higher level management did not impose events on her; rather, she was the one in charge of making these marketing events decisions and only obtaining approval from the owners of the business. As well, in the two cases where higher level management did impose event choices on their event marketing employees, those two participants, Participant 5 and Participant 11, both had less than two years of relevant work experience. Although Participant 5 may not have had much experience in marketing nor in events, this did not stop her from being invested in her events, to be proud of them and to take ownership of them: **“Mes événements, c’est comme mon bébé”**.

The impact of the event marketing manager is noticeable throughout other parts of the results analysis as well. For example, where a marketing events budget is present and there is a marketing and events employee, only Participant 12 is in charge of managing her budget, while Participant 11 plays no role in managing the budget. As well, in terms of measures of evaluation for marketing events, Participant 12 made direct improvements to the evaluation process, thanks to her experience and knowledge accumulated over the years:

“ [Intervieweur : ... est-ce qu’il y a déjà eu des changements que t’as apporté à tes événements ?] Bein oui, **tout le système de « leads » c’est moi qui l’a implanté. Ça ça été comme un gros, gros gros changement...** [Intervieweur : puis comment tu as fait pour le développer ce système là ?] Je suis allée à Las Vegas et j’ai comme appris sur la stratégie de show, comment faire, etc. **Il y avait un système là ça s’appelle « Card Scan » puis je trouvais que ça « fallait » bien [avec notre compagnie] ...**” – Participant 12

For Participant 5, who is in charge of executing her events from A-Z, realized the importance of having a standardized EMPP, as she is now fully in charge of the organization of events for her firm:

“ [Le processus de planification d’événements] **on veut plus le standardiser**, parce que **c’est la première fois cette année que je m’en occupe au complet...** étant donné qu’on doit vraiment standardiser le processus de genre toute l’organisation d’événements et que c’est moi qui s’en occupe majoritairement, c’est quand même un gros travail.”

My sixth research question was to determine the impact that the event manager has on the event marketing planning process (EMPP). Based on my research on SMEs, it is in fact the SME business owners who have the most significant impact on the EMPP, as they control almost every aspect of the EMPP. This was evident through responses from not only business owners of SMEs, but also from the interviewed event marketing coordinators who receive orders from above. The impact that the event managers have is more noticeable at the coordination and execution level, rather than the decision-making level, which was controlled by the business owners. I observed that the more experience an event manager had with events, the more autonomy and more decision-making power they had, which was demonstrated by Participant 12. Likewise, the less experience an event manager had, the less autonomy and decision-making power they had and their tasks were focused more so on executing event tasks, as demonstrated by Participants 5 and 11. Based on these findings, I can concur with several authors that managerial behaviour should be taken into consideration as well, within the event marketing planning process (EMPP) (Ashill et al., 2003; Greenley et al., 2004).

#### 5.7. New SME Results and Discussion: The Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP)

My first research question was to determine whether or not New SMEs (NSMEs) have a formal event marketing planning process and if so, if they need one in order to execute their marketing events. In order to answer this question, I developed the Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP) model, which was adapted from Crowther’s (2011) research and comprises five components: Objectives, Design, Delivery, Evaluation and the Marketing Event Manager’s Role. From the NSMEs that I interviewed, Participant 3 and Participant 9 had an EMPP model like the one I had developed. Otherwise, the majority of the remaining SMEs had their own event marketing planning process, which was unique to their event marketing needs. This is consistent with marketing planning and event marketing literature, which stipulates that having a planning

process can improve the performance of the firm (Whalen & Boush, 2014). For example, Participant 4 claimed to have her own EMPP, which revolved around: finding a topic of interest for her event attendees, finding the necessary resources to make it happen and finishing off with a wrap up of the event. This was quite consistent with all of the different types of events she hosted. On the contrary, Participant 7 seemed to have a different kind of EMPP, which was more specific per event, than as a standardized planning solution for all types of events. Certain components of this EMPP included: deadlines, defining the marketing strategy, choosing the design elements of the event, defining the event experience and finishing off with some sales objectives:

“ *[Intervieweur : puis est-ce que vous avez un processus de planification d'événements ?]* ...C'est sûr, on avait comme des « **deadlines** » là, on avait un échéancier là... *[Intervieweur : mais c'est quoi la première étape dans le processus par exemple ?]* Par exemple pour cet événement là... on s'était rencontré [les organisateurs de l'événement] pour voir autant **la stratégie marketing** de cet événement là, mais aussi **discuter des activités** qu'il y aura, parce que c'est sûr que **un événement, c'est pas juste un événement où le monde vient ; il faut discuter du thème, des attractions, des gens présents, des bouchées, alors vraiment autant dans la nourriture, que l'expérience de l'événement, que aussi l'expérience marketing qu'on va pousser et promouvoir sur les médias sociaux...** *[Intervieweur : Alors ça part de l'événement ?]* Oui, c'est ça. *[Intervieweur : ok, puis, est-ce qu'à la fin vous faites un post-mortem ?]* On en a pas fait les dernières fois... [en parlant de mesures de succès pour des événements passés] **mais c'est vrai qu'on pourrait avoir plus d'objectifs [pour nos événements] ... on se donne juste des objectifs de ventes pour nos événements clients... mais tu vois, c'est quelque chose qu'on pourrait faire de plus...**” – Participant 7

With that being said, one of the participants, Participant 10, did not have an EMPP at all. Participant 10 explained to me that because he mostly attended trade shows, not much planning was required on his end, except for making sure he had all the pieces in place. Otherwise, he blamed his lack of EMPP on the fact that they were a young business, playing catch up with their events at the moment and that were it not for these trade shows that they attend setting deadlines for them, the rest of their work would not be on track:

“**The event planning process, no, it's not very established. A lot of the time, with these pre-organized events (trade shows), you have the event organizer that's sort of holding you by the hand,** telling you... this is where you need to go and this is the schedule and... this is how much it costs and everything... **The planning you have to do is make sure you have all the pieces in place...** [Interviewer: ...Let's say you guys get approached from an event that's happening in Toronto next weekend, and then from there you'll decide whether or not you're doing it and then you'll plan the process and whatever?] Well, **it is because we're so early on, we're sort of catching up, so we haven't had time to sort of be ahead of the game, so that's how it is right now, but however when we plan our yearly calendar of events, we hope to be planning**”

**some of our processes and strategies, based on those events...** We are going to be at the [insert trade show name] as an exhibitor this time in September, and, we are planning to basically have our Canadian packaging for all our products like overhauled and revamped, to be ready for that [insert trade show name]. So, **it is, sort of these events, they create some sort of deadlines** for product development and processes that happen internally..." – Participant 10

This is not consistent with the literature on marketing planning and event marketing, however, Participant 10's results support SME marketing literature, which shows that SMEs are limited in terms of resources, which in turn negatively affects daily operations of the business.

On this note, many of the SMEs claimed to have an informal EMPP, versus a formal one. As per my EMPP, the first step is to choose the objectives of the marketing event, before choosing anything else. Seeing as how Participant 3 and Participant 9 had an EMPP model like the one I developed, they began the EMPP by setting the objectives of the marketing event. For the other NSMEs, they began by choosing the event platform first, as demonstrated in the above-mentioned examples with Participant 7 and Participant 10. This point is not in line with marketing planning and event marketing literature, where authors argue that the event objectives must and should come first, as this constitutes the reasons for which a firm will choose to utilize event marketing, as part of their marketing strategy (Getz, 2007). According to Wilson (2004) this is the most important step in the EMPP, as it sets the tone for the overall process and should reflect the firm's mission. With that said, it is important to note that although the NSMEs said they began their EMPP with the event platform choice first and not the event objectives, event objectives were considered during the event platform choice process and were dependent of them. When considering an event platform, if the event platform did not align with the event objectives, it was rejected.

To answer my first research question, almost all of my interviewed SMEs did in fact have some form of an EMPP or wanted to have one; this leads me to believe that NSMEs should have an EMPP. Having an EMPP can allow the event manager to be more organized and to better manage all aspects of their events. It is clear from these results that NSMEs see the value and importance in having an EMPP.

### 5.8. New SME Results and Discussion: Marketing Events Objectives

My second research question was to determine why NSMEs choose to use marketing events. For all NSMEs, this was very heavily linked with objectives; what the marketing events could accomplish for them, in terms of attaining these objectives; this is consistent with prior research conducted on marketing event objectives. In fact, almost all NSMEs claimed that events played a very important role in their firm, for various reasons. For example, Participant 9 explained to me that for her business, events were key, as they allowed her customers to get to know her brand, as she is an online retailer. As well, having spoken to other entrepreneurs from her industry, she had been told that events were the best way and the least expensive way to acquire customers, which, so far, had proven to be true for her as well. To her, events were key, as they had the most impact:

“Parce que vu qu’on est en ligne, c’est sûr que **les événements pour nous autre c’est clé, pour le monde de connaître la marque**, c’est sûr qu’ils se sentent un peu plus investis dans la marque, quand ils nous rencontrent nous, puis ils entendent parler de la mission de la marque de vive voix. Aussi, on est toujours en train de parler avec d’autres entrepreneurs, pis d’autres personnes qui sont dans l’espace « wellness ». Aussi un facteur qu’on doit convaincre les gens de faire le « switch », j’veux dire, c’est un nouvel aspect la beauté naturelle, donc **beaucoup de personnes qui sont dans cet espace-là (l’espace « wellness »), qui ont été « successful » disent c’est vraiment les événements, c’est la meilleure façon et la façon la moins chère de faire du « customer acquisition ». Puis à date c’est ça qu’on a trouvé.** Tsé c’est sûr qu’il y a aussi les « Google ads », les « social media ads », pousser les médias sociaux, puis aussi avoir des articles dans les journaux, dans les magazines, **mais les événements on trouve que c’est vraiment clé. Clé parce que ça le plus d’impact.**” – Participant 9

For Participant 10, although at a very early stage with events, he already knew that they were going to play a huge role for his firm and allow him to reach buyers of his product; thus sell his product to the general public: “...where **events are going to be very big part of what we do as a company and how we reach out to other parties and get buyers on board.** So it’s kinda a very steep learning curve where you learn as you go, but so far so good”. When asked about his objectives for events, Participant 10 enumerated a number of items, but finished off by telling us it was really all about sales and potential sales: “really at the end of the day **it’s our sales.** So even if it’s not an immediate impact on our sales, it’s what are **the short, medium and long-term potential impact on our sales**”.

These marketing events objectives were quite homogenous, from one NSME to another. Primary objectives for NSMEs when hosting events included: brand awareness and customer related objectives. For Participant 3, hosting events allowed her to attain her firm and event objectives, which were to create a strong brand identity and to generate traffic within her restaurant. She added that with her events, she wanted to create this wow effect for her attendees and that she could have other objectives, like increasing sales, but her business was just not at that stage yet:

“ [Intervieweur : puis pourquoi [nom de la compagnie] organise-t-elle des événements ?] J’té dirais encore pour les objectifs (marketing) qu’on s’était donné, de **créer de la notoriété et générer du trafic à l’intérieur du restaurant...** et aussi, **pour créer cet effet de « wow » avec les clients, quand ils arrivent au restaurant pour l’événement... on pourrait avoir d’autres objectifs, on pourrait avoir augmentation des ventes, mais là on n’est pas là, on est plus dans notoriété, générer du trafic.**” – Participant 3

For Participant 7, she claimed that events played a moderate role for her NSME, but that if they had more budget, they would be able to host more events and give a greater importance to them:

“ *[Intervieweur : c’est quel niveau d’importance qui est attribué aux événements ?]* Si j’ai à donner une échelle... **je crois que c’est assez modéré. Ce n’est pas non plus notre outil de prédilection pour le succès de la compagnie, mais je crois qu’on y accorde une importance assez modérée, mais pas non plus, mais je pense que si on avait plus de budget, on en aurait probablement plus, s’il y avait un budget.** *[Intervieweur : pourquoi il n’y a pas plus de budget ?]* « Start-up ».” – Participant 7

When further questioned about one of her particular events, as to why they did it and the objectives behind it, there was a very conflictual response. She claimed to do it in order to attract loyal customers and future loyal customers, but this also brought in non-loyal customers who were just interested in the promotion:

“Je pense que parce qu’on fait de gros rabais pendant nos événements, ce n’est pas vraiment quelque chose qu’on veut promouvoir non plus. Il y a quand même un bon rabais qu’on offre... Qu’on le veuille ou non, les gens qui vont venir à l’événement, ça va peut-être être juste un « one time thing » tsé... Mais c’est sûr que pour nous, **l’événement dans l’idéal, dans le meilleur du monde, ça serait vraiment de fidéliser notre clientèle. Mais je pense qu’on aura vraiment autant des gens qui connaissent la marque depuis les 2-3 ans qu’on existe, mais aussi des gens qui sont juste là pour les promotions.** Et je pense qu’on ne veut pas mettre ça de l’avant, on veut pas être connus comme étant une compagnie de promotions... *[Intervieweur : mais alors comment ça vous attachez l’événement à la promotion, ou vice-versa ?]* Je pense que pour nous c’est un peu **un « incentive » intéressant, pour attirer les gens à venir, à se déplacer, puis il y a l’exclusivité de premièrement se déplacer et s’il y a une promotion qui va juste être en boutique pendant cette soirée-là, juste en boutique.**” – Participant 7

Secondary objectives to hosting events included: sales related objectives, customer acquisition objectives and promotional related objectives.

For attended events, objectives were less homogenous than for the hosted events. Common objectives included: brand awareness, business and relationship development and promotional related objectives. It was interesting to note that for the NSMEs which took part in hosting and attending events, there were mixed results in terms of objectives. Two NSMEs had different objectives when it came to their attended and hosted events and the third NSME had the same objectives for its attended and hosted events. For example, Participant 7 who both hosted and attended events, claimed to have many objectives such as: sales, customer acquisition, brand awareness and promotional related objectives for her hosted events, but only business and relationship development for her attended events. Similarly for Participant 9, who explained that

standing out was an important objective for her hosted events, did not express this feeling when it came to attending events. This demonstrates that NSMEs use different types of events (hosted and attended) with different objectives and goals in mind. As mentioned, there was one case where objectives were similar, such as with Participant 10, who claimed that: sales and brand awareness were common objectives to both his hosted and attended events. This shows that for Participant 10, all of his event initiatives have the same objectives and goals.

To conclude, the objective of my second research question was to determine why NSMEs choose to use marketing events. From my NSME results analysis, I can conclude that NSMEs mainly choose to use event marketing, as they believe it is one of the best, if not the best way for them to achieve one or more of their event objectives. The most common objectives for attended events are: business/relationship development and promotional objectives, whereas for hosted events they are: brand awareness, customer and sales objectives.

### 5.9. New SME Results and Discussion: Management of Marketing Events

My third research question was to determine how NSMEs manage their marketing events. This proved to be a challenging question, as various questions needed to be asked of the participants, in order to understand how they manage their marketing events. The aspects which I have used to address this question are the following: the marketing events decisions, the choices behind the chosen marketing events, budget management, challenges related to hosting and/or attending events and means of communications for the marketing events.

#### 5.9.1. New SME Marketing Events Decisions

To begin with the first aspect, the marketing events decisions, the NSMEs were divided on almost all levels. To begin, half of them claimed that marketing events decisions were done with a team, whereas the other half claimed to do it alone. In most of the cases where the marketing events decisions were done with a team, this team was composed of event and marketing employees. The same goes for the events calendar; half of the NSMEs claimed to have a predetermined events calendar, whereas the other half did not have one. For example, Participant 10 said to not have an events calendar yet, as they had not had the time to make one yet, but that it was at the top of their to do list:

*“[Interviewer: and, do you guys have a predetermined event calendar for the year?] We don’t and we would really like to build one, we sort of are, in a bit kind of catch-up mode. [But] we get approached for events and so far, it’s been more than enough to sort of answer “yes or no” to all of the requests that have been coming in... however, we are really going to need to have a list, a very clear list where we target the right kinds of events and we don’t waste time on the ones that don’t have a very significant impact for us. So that is our top list of priorities, creating a list of events...”* – Participant 10

Later on in the interview, Participant 10 mentions how eventually, when they will have a yearly events calendar, it will make things easier in terms of event logistics. For Participant 1, who also did not have a predetermined events calendar, this was due to the fact that events would get added to the calendar throughout the year: **“We don’t plan for them [the events] ahead [of time]... a lot of times, we will, like our sales people will hear about an event halfway through the year and go “oh, I really want to go to this”. If it’s going to give them leads, if they’re going to be excited to go and work hard, then we’ll sign up, if it makes sense.”** – Participant 1

For Participant 9, she was kind of in between both, as she had an events calendar for certain events, but saw the need to plan for more events, once her business had matured:

*“[Intervieweur: ok, puis est-ce que vous avez un calendrier des événements qui est prédéterminé à l’avance, ou... ?] Oui et non [rires]. Non, on a un « marketing calendar », puis il y a une section événements. Pour ce qui est des [nom de l’événement], c’est sûr que c’est déterminé à l’avance, mais pas si à l’avance là, c’est plus comme, un ou deux mois à l’avance j’te dirais. C’est un peu comme un « domino effect », parce que souvent quand qu’on fait un [nom de l’événement de vente], il y a une personne dans cet événement-là, qui eux ensuite vont vouloir en faire un, alors on l’a enchaîné comme ça... **mais sinon, pas vraiment. C’est sûr que plus c’est une grosse initiative** comme avec [nom de la compagnie à Participant 7], c’est sûr que là on essaie de faire des événements, donc ça **c’est peut-être 3-4 mois à l’avance. Mais sinon c’est, faut tellement être fluide, il faut tellement s’adapter, c’est sûr qu’il faut être bien organisé aussi, mais comme quand, surtout la première année, que t’es en marche, c’est pas quelque chose que tu planifies tant que ça. Tant que ça d’avance je veux dire.**”* – Participant 9

This pattern continues with the management of the marketing events, where for half of the NSMEs, the marketing events are managed by the event marketing managers and for the other half, the marketing events are managed by upper level management (i.e. a founder, owner or president), even though there is a dedicated marketing employee. This is consistent with SME marketing literature, which shows that “entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur” (Gilmore, 2011). This implies that the entrepreneur (i.e. the business owner) is the person leading the marketing initiatives (Morrish, 2011), which is what some of the results from my research have reflected, with regards to event marketing initiatives. For the marketing events which are managed by the event marketing manager, only Participant 3 is also in charge of choosing the events and making logistical and organizational decisions about them. In all other cases, although the marketing manager may do the initial research on events and present them to higher-level management, it is really the higher-level management which is making the final decisions and all of the important logistical and organizational decisions. As an example of this, we have Participant 1:



“*[Interviewer: how does your company manage its presence at the events you attend?]* So my COO will usually be the one responsible for identifying how large we want to go. So, he and the sales team a little bit will determine “ok, we want a 10x10 booth, or 10x20” and we predict that this will be so successful. **Its somewhat based on the analysis of the marketing person first, but, they [the COO] are the end decision maker.** And from there, the marketing person will be responsible for putting together our presence. So, what furniture, what design, what graphics, they’ll work with our graphics team... we will also work with strategy and sales to find out what message we want to come out with... **so marketing is in charge of then executing [the events].**” – Participant 1

In the cases where the marketing events are managed by a high-level executive, the events decisions are also made by him or her. The only point of consensus across the border is that marketing events need to be approved by high level management. It was interesting to find out that some NSMEs had either sponsors or partners, for their events, which is also consistent with popular event marketing literature on sponsorships (Park & Park, 2017; Van Niekerk, 2017). For example, Participant 7 and Participant 9 had decided to partner up for an event, where both of them mutually benefitted from this partnership. For Participant 7, this meant more event visibility and many more event attendees than in the past. It also presented an excellent opportunity to partner up for events with other brands, for future events:

“Là on est « sold out » [pour notre événement avec Participant 9] ... on a pas eu besoin de le [l'événement] pousser tant que ça, ça vraiment vraiment bien été, ça monté vite. *[Intervieweur : et ça est-ce que c'était attendu ou c'est surprenant ?]* Non, non, on est surprises. Au début on avait seulement mis 60 billets max [sur Eventbrite] puis là on est rendues à 140 personnes... non mais c'est ça, on s'attendait vu que c'est gratuit que le monde vont réserver plus et que ça sera pas le nombre exacte, mais quand même, **140 réservations comparativement à nos anciens événements, c'est beaucoup... Moi je pense que c'est beaucoup à cause de [nom de la compagnie à Participant 9]. Parce que elles ont invités les gens sur le « event Facebook », donc ça double un peu, ça triple en fait le, les amis Facebook.** Les amis vont dire : « eille, viens tu à cet événement avec moi ? » ... **donc je pense que c'est beaucoup de bouche-à-oreille, un peu un effet domino. C'est quelque chose qu'on va retenir pour les prochains [événements], si on a des partenaires, d'inviter d'autres marques à faire l'événement avec nous, ça peut être pertinent.**” – Participant 7

Participant 9 provided me with even more insight into this event partnership with Participant 7. For her, this partnership was meant to show off the publicity campaign the two NSMEs had collaborated on and to allow both firms access to each other's client bases; thus, acquiring more clients. They chose to collaborate with each other, as they had similar branding styles and thus thought it was a good idea for them to work together. Participant 9 also added that

a contest, which was organized in parallel with the event, allowed them to acquire more followers on their respective social media platforms:

“[L’événement organisé en collaboration avec Participant 7] c’est un événement pour démontrer la campagne [publicitaire que les deux compagnies ont faites ensemble] et pour que [nom de la compagnie à Participant 7] puisse bénéficier, aille chercher nos clients et aussi, pour que nous on aille chercher les clients de [nom de la compagnie à Participant 7]. Donc c’est vraiment comme un échange de clients, juste pour « kick off » le « partnership » qu’on a fait pour cette campagne-là... Donc c’est vraiment encore une fois : acquisition de clients, puis [parce que] on a un peu le même style de « branding » etc. Donc on croit que ça va nous aider, on a aussi fait un concours qui nous a aidé à avoir plus de followers sur nos plateformes [de médias sociaux], de faire ça plus live, quelque chose de plus concret que « online », on trouvait ça intéressant.” – Participant 9

Participant 9 added later on in the interview that the event partnership with Participant 7 meant splitting all costs in two; thus, saving money, something which was important to her. It also meant more event attendees, as the event was already sold out and they had not even had a chance to publicize it in their newsletter:

“Donc c’est sûr qu’on a [aussi] des événements collaboratifs, comme avec [nom de la compagnie à Participant 7], tous les coûts sont « split » en deux. Je crois que comme 1 à 2 fois par année on va faire des « partnerships » parce que c’est quelque chose qui est très très lucratif pour nous, qui nous permet d’économiser des coûts quand même... Quoique pour l’événement avec [nom de la compagnie à Participant 7], on a pas eu le temps d’envoyer une infolettre, parce qu’il est déjà « full » là, on l’a annulé.” – Participant 9

As well, almost all of the NSMEs revealed that they often took part in trial and error with regards to their events, which is consistent with literature. According to Parrott et al. (2010), “assuming, guessing and making gut-feel decisions” with regards to their marketing events is normal, because there is a lack of “specific, tailored [marketing] guidelines” (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010) for SMEs. Therefore, SMEs have no other choice but to make assumptions, guesses and gut-feel decisions, when it comes to marketing events. For these SMEs, they were willing to take risks, if they saw a profitable outcome on the other end. For Participant 1, she did this with regards to her event choices. She told me that in their first year, they attended a variety of events, as they thought they all had excellent sales potential for them. After this first year, they had to reassess this strategy, as some of the events had not been as fruitful as they thought they would be:

“It was the first year that we attended [event name]. And, it was good, there were people who like own [establishment type] and they have a lot of [potential client type], but... and **what we found there, it was a learning experience, that, the solution that we have is great for**

[industry sector 1] and a little bit for [industry sector 2], but the [industry sector 3] has a unique kind of hierarchies and the [product name] isn't quite there yet. So, we kind of made the decision that unless we are ready to [make specific types of changes to their product], a lot of positioning towards [industry sector 3] and we are ready to do a development push with our [product name] towards [industry sector 3], then we might go back. But in the meantime, probably not.” – Participant 1

Continuing with Participant 1, in other cases, some events were a good match the first time around, as the event was suited to her firm's current objectives. However, as her firm's objectives changed over time, then certain events which had been fruitful in the past, were no longer so:

“After that, we went to [event name] ...it was the second year we went to that. And **the first year it was interesting for the company because there were a lot of partner opportunities...** so it was really great, but it wasn't a [sales] leads show per say. It wasn't generating business. It was more of a partnership, kind of industry relations show... **in 2016 it worked because we were in that phase where we just wanted to meet people and be in the [industry name] ...sorry in 2015 it worked for those reasons. But in 2016 we attended again... but because the company had progressed to the point where we were really looking for leads, it wasn't as rewarding to be there... so, ya, it wasn't as fruitful this year. I mean, in 2016.**” – Participant 1

Participant 9 demonstrated this by the fact that she says yes to participating in or attending all the events that approach her, as long as it fits in her budget. Later on, when asked about her budget, she told us that things such as budgeting for events was difficult, because they were still in a test phase with everything and that setting a budget will have to wait until they have analyzed their first year of operations. The case was quite similar for Participant 10, who also attended events (once they went through an initial evaluation) on a trial and error basis:

“...when you do an event, you can then measure the results of that event through various metrics and decide whether: one, you wanna do that same event... and you're going to decide whether you want to do similar events in the future, based on the results you got with one type of event, over time. **So, I guess it's just a learning process,** but, the most difficult thing, is evaluating the potential impact you'll get and judging how much effort, time and money you wanna put into it, for the impact you will get from it.” – Participant 10

#### 5.9.2. New SME Choices Behind Chosen Marketing Events

The second aspect includes the choices behind the chosen marketing events. Similarly to the objectives of marketing events, not much consensus was obtained here either with regards to the different NSMEs. However, in most cases, the choices behind the chosen marketing events was in line with the objectives set for these events. For hosted events, some of the NSMEs revealed

that whenever possible, they tried to use their contacts, whether it be to cut costs or to gain information. Otherwise, the management of hosted events revolved around marketing activities, such as: branding, social media and communications, where participants expressed the importance of using those activities in order to promote their events. For Participant 7, social media played a very important role for her hosted events, not only in terms of promoting the events, but also, in terms of the word of mouth and user generated content it provided:

“Si les gens ont un bon temps à l'événement, ça fait du « **positive word of mouth** », ça nous fait fidéliser la clientèle, ça va nous chercher de nouveaux clients... on essaye réellement de bâtir une loyauté. Puis nous aussi **ce qu'on espère avec nos événements, on veut aussi du contenu généré par les « users » donc on aimerait ça qu'il y ait un « buzz » naturel sur les réseaux sociaux... un sens de communauté...**” – Participant 7

As well, it was important for Participant 7 to host these client events, in order to show her current and possibly future clients what the brand's experience was and to get this in-person contact:

“C'est un événement client... vraiment dédié pour faire passer un bon temps, une heure ou deux, on leur sert les drinks, on a des fois du champagne, **pour leur montrer qu'est-ce que l'expérience [nom de la compagnie]**, leur permettre de passer un bon moment ici... **montrer la « vibe » que tu vas pas nécessairement sentir juste à travers le « web »**. C'est d'avoir un contact plus privilégié aussi... Si les gens ont un bon temps à l'événement, ça fait du « positive word of mouth », ça nous fait fidéliser la clientèle, ça va nous chercher de nouveaux clients... on essaye réellement de bâtir une loyauté.” – Participant 7

For Participant 3, her choices and reasons behind hosting events was about creating an attachment to the brand and allowing the consumer to discover it: “le rôle de l'événementiel comme on a fait, par exemple, j' pense que **ça crée un attachement à la marque, ça fait découvrir la marque ... mais principalement vraiment là, ça crée un attachement, puis une association.**” But, it went further than that. For her, it was important to connect with each and every event attendee, in order to create that link, that attachment to the brand. She wanted people to be able to tell a story and to understand why they were at the event. She also explained that it was a bit different with larger events, as there are more attendees, but that you should always allow the consumer to put a face to the brand (or company) and to ensure that there is a link formed:

“Par exemple, quand qu'on a fait le lancement, je m'étais donnée comme **mission que j'allais parler à tout le monde... pour créer c'te lien là**. Parce que si tu vas là et tu parles à personne, tu te dis « ah, c'tai plate ma soirée », ou « ah, j'ai rencontré personne » ... mais là, « **ah, j'ai rencontré la personne** », on dirait que **t'es capable de raconter une histoire après t'es comme « ah, oui, là je comprends, c'est pourquoi j'étais là »**. C'était vraiment, pour moi,

**c'était très important, surtout quand tu fais de petits événements. Il y avait comme 40-50 personnes maximum, ça fait partie de l'expérience. Tu créés un attachement, tu mets un visage à la place. Pis les gros événements, c'est sûr que c'est différent, mais, tout le temps tu mets un visage, tu t'assures qu'il y a un lien, parce que la personne s'est déplacée pour toi dans le fond, ce qui n'est pas rien.**" – Participant 3

Participant 3 was also in the process of planning her participation and attendance at a number of events in the upcoming year and explained to me how she based her decisions and choices. These were based upon on what popular events were taking place in Montreal, making sure to select events that would attract people, events that her own business could relate to in terms of values and impactful events:

*"[Intervieweur : puis, comment vous faites pour choisir les événements que vous allez faire dans l'année ?] On se renseigne sur ce qui existe à Montréal, puis on essaie de se dire « bon, il y a tel événement qui arrive ». Par exemple, il y a un événement, je l'ai pas dit, je sais pas si ça rentre dans l'événementiel c'est pour ça là... C'est le festival du grilled cheese. Donc, ça se passe dans une semaine, ou les gens, les restaurants ... là on va faire partie des restaurants et les gens vont venir goûter à notre grilled cheese. Ça c'est un festival. Il y a aussi le festival YUL Eat, on va participer à ça aussi... Alors vraiment c'est de **se renseigner sur les « buzz », qu'est-ce qui existe, qu'est-ce qui va attirer des gens**, et on décide bon, sur quoi qu'on va s'associer. Bon alors évidemment, nous autre, **le jour de la terre, ça nous parle parce que on est santé, biologique, responsable, donc ça fait partie de notre philosophie, donc on va aller s'associer à ces événements-là...** Dans le fond c'est comme ça qu'on choisit nos événements, **c'est quoi, qui ça va attirer, qu'est-ce que ça va avoir comme retombées, c'est quoi l'impact.**" – Participant 3*

For attended events, there was much more insight given by the NSMEs as well as more consensus, as the NSMEs attended more events than they hosted events. To begin with, a few of the NSMEs claimed that they chose to attend marketing events, as they had sales related objectives in mind. Other than choosing to attend events with objectives in mind, a few of the NSMEs expressed this feeling of obligation to attend events. For Participant 1, it was for political reasons: "...we went to one [event] last year, we knew it was going to be very quiet but **we kind of had to go for political reasons**. The organizing committee has a board [from] which **we won a prize the year before, so we have to go**, to be part of kind of the community." For Participant 10, this obligation was due to the fact that events play a huge role in his NSME's industry: "**the food industry organizes itself around events and that's just how it is. And there's these huge events**, that are there, and kind of **all the brands are there and if you're not there you're sort of not on the map. So, it's just a critical thing to do.**" Both Participant 1 and Participant 10 also claimed to attend events, based on logistical reasons. For Participant 1, she claimed to receive more value out of being a repeat exhibitor at events and better exposure towards potential clients, as well as other advantages like making better decisions with event experience and being able to

cut her costs. For Participant 10, there were many more consideration points behind his event choices, such as satisfying the event organizers and the attendees of the events they attend, the attendees of events and logistics considerations:

*“[Interviewer: how do you go about choosing the events you’ll attend?] So, the first thing is... **whether we’re ready for it**, whether we believe that **we will meet the expectations of the event planners and of the attendees**... then, the second thing is, who is attending the event? Are they a prime target for us? Whether its wholesale level, is it the right kind of buyers that are going to be there? If its retail level, is it the right kind of consumers that will be there?... **So we definitely want to know that the clientele, the customer base, or just the attendee base is right for us.** And then there’s sort of **practical logistics kind of considerations**... Is it cost effective to get all of our stuff there? Timing? What city is it in? How many people do we need to mobilize to participate in it?”* – Participant 10

However, later on in the interview, Participant 10 says that his event choices are based upon money, time, effort and impact: “But really, **it’s about: how many dollars we spent, how much time and effort its gonna take and how much impact we will have from those dollars and time spent.**” A few of the NSMEs also claimed to attend events, when invited to do so by the event organizers, as was mainly the case with Participant 10’s choice of attended events. Participant 10 was contradictory in what he had to say about a particular aspect of his attended event choices. He claimed that he wanted to visit a trade show the first year and from there decide whether or not he would exhibit the following year. However, in actuality, that was not the case. He told me that the last few trade shows he had been at, he had attended as an exhibitor for the first time, without ever visiting, as he had been invited to exhibit for a first time, from the event organizers. As previously mentioned, it was interesting to note that Participant 9 attended as many events as possible, as other experienced people had told her that events are a good and affordable way to acquire clients quickly, as they have more impact and are key.

### 5.9.3. New SME Management of the Event Marketing Budget

The third aspect was related to the management of the event marketing budget. Surprisingly, almost all of the NSMEs had a marketing events budget. With that being said, for Participant 1 who said to have a budget, it was more of an evolutionary budget, as it tended to change over the course of the year, depending on the events they attended. For the NSMEs who did not have a marketing events budget Participant 4 explained to me that she did not need one; all of her events cost her virtually nothing to produce and if there were costs attached to them, they were covered by her firm’s partners. For Participant 10 however, he had not yet set an events budget, as he was typically told what the budget was for the events he attended and so, it was more up to him to assess whether or not it was worth attending. This was done on a case by case basis, for all his attended events:

“*[Interviewer: do you have a budget for your events?]* We don’t have a predetermined [budget]. **A lot of the time, the budget will be dictated to us.** So, it’ll say, **this is how much it costs to participate and then we just have to gauge what products and materials we need...** So really the main costs of the event are the fee to attend the event... and then you have the costs of the product you have to get ready... and then there’s the marketing materials which generally cost, I dunno, a couple hundred bucks to get ready. **So, do we have a budget? Um, not really. Do we plan ahead of time and say this is our budgeting for events for the year? We definitely don’t. We take kind of each opportunity and evaluate it on its own merits and we will decide, based on what kind of costs and financial impact and pros and cons, to decide whether we want to invest the money for an event...** And then for our own event, I would say that **when we do our launch party, it’s going to be this sort of discussion with venues and events companies and various people, to understand what kind of budget we need to really achieve this scale and quality that we want to achieve and then we will set a budget.**” – Participant 10

With this being said, budget management is not mentioned in any part of Crowther’s (2011) EMPP model.

In terms of the management of the budget, the results were mixed. In some of the cases where there was a dedicated marketing events manager, like Participant 1 and Participant 3, they were in charge of setting and managing the marketing events budget, which was only to be approved by higher level management. In other cases, it was upper level management who was in charge of all aspects of the budget, even if there was a dedicated event marketing manager, like Participant 7. This is another example of entrepreneurial marketing being driven by the entrepreneur (Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011). It was interesting to note that although Participant 7 was in no way in charge of the budget, she definitely believed it was limited and thus negatively impacted certain sectors of activity of the business:

“*[Intervieweur: c’est quoi les défis reliés à l’organisation d’événements ?]* **Le budget c’est un grand défi, c’est un de nos plus grands défis. Parce qu’il est limité... Un défi qu’on a ici c’est qu’on travaille pas à temps plein. Faq j’ai mettons moi une banque d’heures par semaine, tsé ça, ça nous permet pas non plus de planifier... c’est pas mal au jour le jour, alors ça c’est un défi. Et c’est encore une question de budget.**” – Participant 7

As well, earlier on in the interview, Participant 7 told me that they only hosted one or two events per year, depending on what the budget allowed for: « ... [on fait] un ou deux événements par année, dépendant de ce que le budget permet ». This is all in line with SME literature, which demonstrates that SMEs are often limited in terms of their financial resources (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Carson & Cromie, 1990; Cheng et al., 2016; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; O’Donnell, 2011; Reijonen, 2010; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009).

In the cases where there was no event marketing manager, upper level management was in charge of setting and managing the marketing events budget. It was interesting to note that even in terms of budgeting, Participant 9 took part in trial and error, as they are but within their first year of operation and are still trying to figure out a bunch of things:

“*[Intervieweur : est-ce que vous avez des budgets établis pour les événements ?]* Oui oui oui. Mais comme j’tu dis, ça dépend, **le budget établi dépend vraiment des objectifs de l’événement**. Si c’est un événement shopping, c’est sûr que le budget est un peu plus gros, mais **on essaie tout le temps tout le temps d’être « super super super lean »**. *[Intervieweur : ça veut dire quoi « lean » ?]* **Bein de tout le temps épargner le plus souvent, mais aux bons endroits tsé, sans avoir l’air cheap et sans avoir l’air comme si on donnait rien à l’événement...** C’est sûr que **ça [le budget] dépend de notre « cash-flow » aussi**. Pour le moment, pis c’est quoi nos autres dépenses, c’est quoi nos entrées d’argent, c’est sûr que ça aussi ça joue un gros rôle là, surtout pour une petite compagnie comme la nôtre. *[Intervieweur : ok, puis je sais que vous faites plusieurs événements différents, mais côté allocation du budget, la répartition, tu me dirais, comme 25-25 partout ou... ?]* J’pourrais pas te dire en ce moment, comme j’tai dit **on est tellement en phase de test, quand on va faire un compte rendu de notre première année, là on pourra mieux allouer notre budget**, mais vu que « customer acquisition » c’est vraiment notre principal objectif, j’crois que pour dans la prochaine année à venir, j’tu dirais que ça serait presque 50%, 40% de notre budget [total].” – Participant 9

#### 5.9.4. New SME Challenges with Organizing Marketing Events

The fourth aspect took into consideration the challenges related to organizing events. Almost all NSMEs claimed to have internal challenges to deal with, which included mainly: finding the time to organize marketing events and the difficulties in organizing marketing events with a limited number of employees and working hours. This is in line with previous SME marketing literature which demonstrates that SMEs have many limitations within their firm, like time (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Carson & Cromie, 1990; Reijonen, 2010) and human resources (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Carson & Cromie, 1990; Fillis, 2002; Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011; O'Donnell, 2011). Participant 9 was a great example of this:

“*[Intervieweur : puis c’est quoi les défis qui sont reliés à l’organisation d’événements ?]* Mais comme je te disais, **vu qu’on est juste deux**, j’veux dire, on est vraiment chanceuses [name of co-founder] et moi que, à cause de nos compétences, à cause de notre expérience, de notre expertise, **on est vraiment capable de faire 90% à deux, ce qui nous permet de sauver beaucoup de coûts, mais c’est sûr que ça nous prend plus de temps**. Donc c’est vraiment juste le fait que, **le manque de ressources humaines** je te dirais.” – Participant 9



Most of the NSMEs also claimed to deal with external challenges, which mainly revolved around the fact that it was difficult to get the right kind of people to attend their events and to get people to attend their events in general. The perfect example of this is Participant 3:

“*[Intervieweur: puis, c’est quoi les défis qui sont reliés à l’organisation d’événements ?]* J’vais dire une bonne planification. Le travail d’équipe, comme de faire des consensus. D’avoir des gens qui sont, qui ont des responsabilités et c’est leurs responsabilités, ils sont... *[Intervieweur: alors des gens qui « deliver » sur leurs responsabilités ?]* Ouais, exactement. Des gens qui vont faire beaucoup de suivis. **Que les gens se déplacent, ça c’est la plus grosse [rires]. Tsé, c’est « number one » là. De faire déplacer du monde c’est dur. Et je pense que c’est le plus gros défi, c’est d’avoir du monde de qualité.** Pis c’est pas parce qu’ils se sont RSVP qu’ils vont venir. *[Intervieweur: puis c’est quoi des gens de qualité ?]* **Notre idée c’est de créer de la notoriété et du trafic. Faq, plus que quelqu’un a un gros réseau, plus il est de qualité on va dire. C’est le réseau.**” – Participant 3

Otherwise, in terms of specific NSME challenges, here too, not much consensus was obtained with regards to challenges; each NSME seemed to have their own unique challenges. Some of the NSMEs had both internal and external challenges for their events, like Participant 7. Her internal challenges revolved around limited resources, such as: a limited budget, limited event space and limited work hours to execute events. Her external challenges included the heavy construction occurring outside of her boutique, as well as uncertainty when it comes to hosting events:

“*[Intervieweur: c’est quoi les défis reliés à l’organisation d’événements ?]* **Le budget c’est un grand défi, c’est un de nos plus grands défis. Parce qu’il est limité,** et je sais pas si t’as remarqué mais pour nous, **la boutique est petite,** donc 140 personnes dans la boutique c’est pas possible ! [Rires]... **Mais c’est un des défis, c’est ça la logistique, on peut pas, la capacité de la boutique c’est un de nos défis.** Dans l’idéal, si on a un budget plus grand, on aimerait ça le faire dans d’autres lieux... **Aussi un des défis je pense pour nous, pour notre événement spécifique, c’est la construction [à l’extérieur sur la rue].** C’est les rénovations, comme les constructions sur [nom de rue où la boutique est située], c’est incroyable comment ça va prendre j’pense un an de plus. **Moi je pense que ça va être un facteur qui va peut-être démotiver les gens à venir [à notre événement], c’est un défi qu’on peut pas contrôler là,** mais ça fait partie de notre quotidien en ce moment... Puis je pense que **un autre défi pour les événements, pour la localisation, c’est le « convenance » pour les gens de venir, parce qu’il y a pas tant de métro proche d’ici... un défi majeur ça serait construction, puis logistiques... Un défi qu’on a ici c’est qu’on ne travaille pas à temps plein. J’ai mettons moi une banque d’heures par semaine, ça nous permet pas non plus de planifier... c’est pas mal au jour le jour, alors ça c’est un défi. Puis encore là c’est une question de budget... Puis il y a toujours les intempéries qui vont survenir,** comme le jour de l’événement il y a quelque chose qui va arriver, je ne sais

pas quoi, **mais il y a toujours quelque chose qui arrive...** on verra. Il y a toujours des imprévus... il faut en prévoir, mais quand même..." – Participant 7

Otherwise, it was important to note that for Participant 7, two of her main challenges, her limited budget and limited event space, had the potential of having a very negative impact on her event objectives:

"...On veut pas que les gens restent là à "chiller" pendant trois heures de temps. Donc on veut qu'il y ait un roulement, **veut veut pas on veut que les gens achètent.** [Intervieweur : *tu dis ça, tu veux pas que le monde reste trois heures de temps mais, c'est pas un événement client, qui est fait pour eux autres ?* ] C'est ça **c'est un événement client pour eux, mais c'est ça on veut qu'il y ait de la vente. On veut pas qu'ils viennent juste siroter... on veut qu'ils viennent vivre l'expérience, mais en même temps, je sais pas, c'est comme... mais c'est à cause du petit espace.** On veut pas que le monde passe trop de temps en ligne non plus. **C'est juste l'espace... Puis on veut aussi que les gens viennent découvrir la marque,** alors s'il y a tellement de personnes et elles peuvent pas circuler ou voir les produits, c'est un peu comme... **on veut pas que les gens puissent pas voir les produits qu'on vend.**" – Participant 7

The situation was similar for Participant 10, who also had both internal and external challenges facing his NSME. The majority of his challenges were outside of the firm and included things such as: not knowing what to expect from marketing events, the fact that many factors are outside of your control, just like Participant 7 mentioned and not knowing if an event will be successful or not. For his internal challenges, these revolved more around making the right decisions when it came to choosing events:

"Um, well, **the biggest challenge is, you just don't know, until you've seen an event and participated in it,** if it's a regular event, **you just don't know what to expect.** So, you don't know, what the attendees, what the people attending the event will be like. The event organizers can give you an idea... but even if you get more details, reality can always differ from what they tell you... **So there are various factors that are kind of out of your control, so it's always going to be a bit of a surprise to see, just how successful an event it is.** And that's the biggest challenge... So, I guess it's [hosting and attending events] just a learning process, but, **the most difficult thing, is evaluating the potential impact you'll get and judging how much effort, time and money you wanna put into it, for the impact you will get from it.**" – Participant 10

For Participant 1, who had the same challenge as Participant 3 with regards to wanting quality attendees at her events, also had other challenges which were external to her firm and based on the events she attended. For example, she found it difficult to exhibit at a trade show for the first time, as the booth allocation you were given was not great. She also had more negative

comments to say with regards to another trade show, the one she felt obliged to attend, as the amount of the event attendees was very low:

“[Event name] that’s the one that we were kind of obligated to go to [laughter]. It’s the [association name]’s annual show. So, if you’re in [industry name] you go to it. They do a great job of providing value to their members, so the [industry companies] themselves, but **the trade show is just dead. There is no traffic. They do a really bad job of selling the event space and creating value for the sponsors.**” – Participant 1

#### 5.9.5. New SME Marketing Events and Communication Channels

The fifth and final aspect took into consideration the various means of communications used by NSMEs, for the promotion of their marketing events. Surprisingly, none of the NSMEs stated that communications play an important role in getting clients and potential clients to attend events. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of NSMEs interviewed mostly attend events (rather than host) thus they do not have much control over attendees, one NSME does not attribute much importance to events and another NSME only hosts events where attendees must receive a personal invitation to attend. However, Participant 10 mentioned the importance of communication channels indirectly in his interview, when he explained to me that it was highly important to go through multiple communications channels, like: personal contacts, media contacts, influencers and friends, in order to ensure that people showed up to his event. The most common way for NSMEs to communicate to event attendees was through social media, friends and family, through the media and via newsletters. Some of the NSMEs also relied upon word of mouth (WOM) in order to spread the word.

To conclude, the objective of my third research question was to determine how NSMEs manage their marketing events. My goal in answering this question was not to give a simple black or white answer, but rather, to give insight on the management of event marketing practiced by NSMEs. The overall and main finding is that NSMEs seemed to be very limited in terms of their resources, the main one being time management related. Many of the NSMEs expressed difficulties such as: having enough time to properly organize events, finding the time to either implement events or implement event processes (like an EMPP, a budget or a calendar) and the proper time management of event schedules. In terms of the actual management teams for events, about half of the NSMEs could use some more marketing and events employees, as there were often cases where only one person was in charge of events. High-level executives seemed to exercise a normal amount of control and direction over their events, giving their event marketing employees a good amount of control over marketing and events. Events were a popular choice for NSMEs, as they felt it was one of the best ways to reach consumers and thus to achieve their firm specific objectives. As for the budget, most of the NSMEs had one. In terms of challenges, the most important one was getting quality clients and customers to attend events. Of the available communication channels to reach clients, social media showed to be the most popular platform. Lastly, NSMEs took part in a moderate amount of trial and error when it comes to the management

of their events. Overall, it would seem that NSMEs manage their events fairly well, but there are definitely some areas to be improved upon, such as limitations of time resources.

#### 5.10. New SME Results and Discussion: Evaluation of Marketing Events

My fourth research question was to determine how NSMEs evaluate their marketing events. In all cases, NSMEs measured their marketing events and did so based on a set of predetermined event objectives.

This is important and in line with previous research on the topic, where Brown, Getz, Pettersson & Wallstam (2015) stress the importance of evaluation as it is “an essential management function of information gathering and feedback through which processes can be improved, goals more effectively attained, and by which organizations can learn and adapt”. In essence, if SMEs evaluate their events, this can help them to improve their event practices. According to Brown et al.’s (2015) research, it is important to conduct both internal and external event evaluation processes, in order to capture the perspectives of all stakeholders. However, very few of the NSMEs took part in conducting an external evaluation process; for example, Participant 1 said to have “just not thought about doing it”. For the few who did conduct an external evaluation process, they mostly gathered qualitative feedback from event attendees, in an informal setting.

Some mentioned having a formal evaluation process, whereas others mentioned that their evaluation process was quite informal. In all cases where the NSME had an informal evaluation process, it also believed that its evaluation process could be improved. As an example, we have Participant 7 who said:

*[Intervieweur : ok, puis, est-ce qu'à la fin (du processus de planification d'événements) vous faites un post-mortem ?] On en a pas fait les dernières fois... [en parlant de mesures de succès pour des événements passés] **mais c'est vrai qu'on pourrait avoir plus d'objectifs [pour nos événements] ...on se donne juste des objectifs de ventes pour nos événements clients... mais tu vois, c'est quelque chose qu'on pourrait faire de plus...**” – Participant 7*

A second example of this is Participant 1, whose evaluation measures of events are mostly focused on sales leads and expenses, and so she admits that her firm’s practices could be improved in terms of evaluating the impact of events:

*“[Interviewer: you mention leads as a measure of success, are there any other measures?] Yeah so, in our **post-event analysis, we’ll look at how many leads our sales team got out of it and then we’ll look at the expenses**, like, how much it cost, so that way we can evaluate whether or not we want to make any changes next year. This year there was an element where we were speaking as well [at events], **but we didn’t really measure the success of that speaking opportunity, but we could have done that better**. So, this year it was still: how many leads did we leave the event with? But yeah, **there might have been an opportunity to say okay well, we***

got [high profile client's name] to come up on stage with us [to speak], what does this mean for the [high profile client's name] relationship? What does this mean for long-term business? But ya, our tracking [system to evaluate events] is not as good as it probably could be.” – Participant 1

It was interesting to note that in only one case, in Participant 3's case, her marketing events objectives were congruent with her measures of evaluation for her marketing events. In all other cases, although some marketing events objectives were measured, the NSMEs had many more event marketing objectives than actual measures of evaluation for these said objective. Participant 10 for example, only mentioned measuring sales related objectives, when he had not only sales but: brand awareness, promotional related, customer related and relationship development objectives for his marketing events as well. Another example is Participant 4, who claimed to only measure the number of attendees versus the planned number of attendees, when her event marketing objectives included: brand awareness, relationship management and customer related objectives. This could be due to the fact that many of the SMEs claimed that their evaluation process was not perfect and could use some improvement; measures of evaluation being one of them.

In terms of specific measures of evaluation, these mostly revolved around: sales, customer and profitability related objectives. In about half of the cases, NSMEs took part in surveying their event attendees and/or employees (depending on circumstances and event type) and when they did gather qualitative feedback, it was always in an informal way via conversations. For the NSMEs which did not gather any qualitative feedback, there was Participant 3 who stated that she was not really certain why she did not, but that she did not feel that it was necessary to do so anyway:

“ [Intervieweur : puis, est-ce que vous sondez les personnes qui viennent à vos événements pour avoir leurs opinions ?] Non on l'a pas fait. **Normalement on serait du genre à faire ça, mais on n'a pas fait ça.** [Intervieweur : comment ça ?] **Je sais pas** [rires]. **On aurait pu, [mais] on avait plus le goût de les remercier...** Pourquoi on l'a pas fait...? [Intervieweur : mais penses-tu que ça aurait été quelque chose d'intéressant à savoir ?] **Oui mais en même temps, non, parce que je trouvais que la bouffe qu'il y avait était beaucoup plus festive, elle était quand même différente. Je voulais pas mesurer la bouffe, je voulais pas. Dans le fond, ma mesure je l'avais. J'avais pas d'autres questions pour le moment.**” – Participant 3

Marketing events were not only measured in terms of set objectives, but also in terms of satisfaction, sources of dissatisfaction and changes made. In general, NSMEs were satisfied with their overall marketing events outcomes. However, there were some sources of dissatisfaction, which mainly revolved around the attendees. For Participant 1, her dissatisfaction lied with non-relevant event attendees, which for her meant less sales leads opportunities. For Participant 3, her dissatisfaction lied with a low attendance of potential clients and for Participant 4, her dissatisfaction lied with a low attendance of current clients. Participant 10 also expressed some

concerns, with regards to logistics, communications and overall poor organization, from the event organizers of certain events he had attended:

“Sources of dissatisfaction, yes for sure... [for one event we recently attended] well first of all, of the people coming in, like the buyers, were supposed to have name tags identifying who they were, who they were with [which company] ... its critical information. So **at an event, there was a screw up with the [name] cards** and they had to give everyone... a generic card, where the person wrote by hand their first name... I would see their first names, I would be able to know their first name, but not where they were coming from. So, it was very difficult for me to gauge, how to, what to talk to them about, how much time to dedicate to them... so that was really key... [the name cards] are critical, very critical... So, proper identification is a huge thing. Then... **I was sort of, you know, not given the full picture, as far as what the composition of attendees would be.** So, I was expecting there to be more retail people and there ended up being a lot more food services people [like chefs and restaurateurs] ... that’s not very useful for a company [like mine] who sells consumer products... **so, the breakdown of attendees, to really properly communicate that, that would have been more useful for us.** And then... **basic sort of logistics sometimes.** Like [at another event we recently attended] ... **it was unclear in our communication prior to the event whether we had to bring the furniture or whether they would supply the furniture. And, we got there, and there was no furniture.** And, we had a little bit of a panic moment, because we would not have been able to get the furniture in time if we had to do it ourselves... but the communications about the available materials on the spot caused a bit of stress because it was a little bit rushed and it wasn’t made entirely clear to us, who was supplying the materials.”

As well, Participant 9 expressed a lot of dissatisfaction for one event that she hosted, where she hired a PR firm to organize her event for her and lost total control over the event:

“ [Intervieweur : est-ce que vous êtes satisfaits avec les résultats de vos événements ? Tu m’as mentionné celui que tu as fait à Toronto avec une firme de PR] Ah non, ça, **ça c’était terrible,** mais c’est parce que justement, pour une fois dans tous les événements, dans toutes les initiatives des événements, etc. **c’est la première fois qu’on a pas pris la responsabilité et on a donné la responsabilité à un tierce parti, puis je crois c’est pour ça.** Donc ça nous a juste démontrer que **en tant que compagnie, surtout quand tu commences, tu devrais tout faire toi-même et jamais utiliser disons une agence ou quoi que ce soit, parce que tu perds le control.**” – Participant 9

In terms of changes made to marketing events, these mainly revolved around logistical aspects. For example, Participant 10 expressed the importance of beginning the EMPP earlier, in order to ensure a smoother event experience. Participant 9 also expressed this and much more, stressing the needs for having enough support people to ensure the good flow of the event and having a concept for the event:

“*[Intervieweur : puis, est-ce qu’il y a comme des affaires que vous avez, est-ce que vous avez apporté des changements à vos événements, basé sur comme les expériences antérieures ?]* C’est sûr que parce que le premier événement qu’on a fait à [nom de l’établissement], c’était vraiment juste [nom de partenaire] et moi, puis je crois qu’il y avait sa mère qui nous aidait, mais comme, « **we were running around, so much** » que comme **maintenant, on veut vraiment s’assurer qu’on a vraiment assez de monde pour nous supporter**, puis qu’on recrute assez de monde le jour de l’événement, puis que **les choses soient mieux organisées** et que **les tâches soient mieux séparées** aussi le jour de l’événement. **Vraiment juste de mieux planifier là**. Parce que **si tout est bien planifié, c’est comme**, « **it’s a breeze** » tsé, puis je crois que c’est important aussi, un truc qu’on a appris aussi c’est de se mettre en tête « **qu’est-ce qu’on veut communiquer** » **quand on parle aux gens**. Pas d’avoir un « speech » de préparé mais, juste le message en général. Je crois que c’est bien de planifier ça aussi... **il faut qu’on s’assure qu’il y ait un concept [à l’événement], pour que le monde puisse vraiment faire partie de l’événement. Je crois que c’est quelque chose de vraiment vraiment vraiment vraiment important pour se différencier** j’veux dire. Surtout à Montréal il y a moins d’événements qui se passent, mais **à Toronto il y a beaucoup beaucoup d’événements qui se passent et c’est toute la même chose tsé. Je crois que c’est important de tout le temps tout le temps avoir un concept puis ça nous permet de mieux nous différencier aussi, puis de plus rester dans la tête des gens**. Et aussi, quand on l’a comparé [notre événement échec à Toronto] avec celui à [nom de l’établissement où elles ont fait leur premier événement, un party de lancement pour la compagnie], où est-ce que là on avait un concept, puis qu’on a vu tellement un bel impact, **c’est clair comme de l’eau de roche qu’il faut qu’il y ait un concept.**” – Participant 9

This brings us to the seven aspects of Brown et al.’s (2015) event marketing evaluation framework, which will enable us to further examine SMEs’ event marketing evaluation practices. For the first step, very few NSMEs took part in all three of the evaluation paradigms: positivism, interpretive and critical. The interpretive and critical paradigms were the most widely used by all NSMEs, as opposed to the positivism paradigm, which was used but by a couple NSMEs. The critical view it is based on action research, where the aim of the evaluation process is to bring about changes to the marketing event. Some of the NSMEs clearly stated that changes were made to their event marketing practices, such as Participants 9 and 10, after an initial evaluation. The second approach however, the positivism evaluation paradigm, was only used to a certain extent. Where all NSMEs took part in determining cause and effect based on quantitative measurements, especially for sales targets, none conducted any experimental designs. Lastly, the interpretative approach, which takes into consideration the stakeholders’ view and tries to understand it before making any conclusions, was only used by a couple of the NSMEs, through the collection of qualitative feedback from event attendees.

The second aspect of the model consists of NSMEs’ reasons to evaluate their marketing events. For all NSMEs, the main goal of evaluating their events was to determine if they were

successful or not. Although Brown et al. (2015) name many more reasons, for the interviewed NSMEs, reasons to evaluate were not pushed any further than to determine success or failure.

The third aspect of the model is evaluation. As mentioned, NSMEs tended to evaluate their events in an informal setting. Again, not much consideration was put into this step of the process.

In terms of the fourth aspect of the model, which is what to evaluate, NSMEs were quite narrow-minded here as well and tended to stick to the very basics: their event operations.

The fifth aspect of the model is measures of evaluation, which showed much more variety and depth than some of the other aspects. The most popular measures of evaluation included: money-related measures, which, according to Wilson (2004), is logical as money is the indicator of success of an event and thus an obvious measure to use. Other measures also included: social and cultural measures.

The sixth aspect of the model is methods of evaluation. Here too, not much thought was put into choosing a method, where crunching numbers based on sales objectives was the most widely used method, as well as gathering very basic qualitative feedback from event attendees for a few of the NSMEs. According to Brown et al. (2015), the method of evaluation used will depend on the evaluation paradigm that is chosen in the beginning, but this did not find itself to be true with the NSMEs. They chose any methods of evaluation they wanted to, based not on their evaluation paradigms but rather, based on the reasons to evaluate their events.

The seventh and final aspect of the model is uses of the evaluation. In some of the cases, the NSMEs did put to use what they had learned through the evaluation of their events, whether it be: logistical, event planning, bringing about improvements to their events or others.

As mentioned, my objective in choosing this evaluation model was not to test it out, but rather, to understand the various components of it and to determine whether or not the SMEs use some, all, or none of these measures. From the previous analysis, it is clear that only a few of the seven aspects of Brown et al.'s (2015) framework were relevant and used by NSMEs. The main ones were the reasons why NSMEs choose to evaluate their events, what to evaluate. However simple and straightforward these choices may have been, it is what guided their evaluation process and generated results, which the NSMEs were then able to use to bring about improvements to their event marketing practices. As for the remaining aspects, although they were not as important, they were still present in the choices that the NSMEs made.

To answer my fourth research question on how NSMEs evaluate their events, I believe that NSMEs evaluate their events well, but that the overall event marketing evaluation processes has room for a lot of improvement. This is supported by the following synthesis of my results, but also from the belief of the majority of the NSMEs that their evaluation processes could be better. The things which are presently done well include: measuring marketing events based on a set of predetermined event objectives, conducting an internal evaluation process and measuring sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. However, there are many areas of improvement which include: reasons to evaluate, what to evaluate (measuring all of the event's objectives), conducting an external evaluation process and implementing more aspects from Brown et al.'s (2015) framework. Although it is important to measure the success of one's events, there are many more points to be



evaluated as well. This limited evaluation process could be due to the fact that although these NSMEs could still be rather new at creating event marketing initiatives or the people in charge could be rather unfamiliar with events as well.

#### 5.11. New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing's Role Within the Overall Marketing Strategy

My fifth research question was to determine the role that event marketing plays within the overall marketing strategy. In order to answer this question, we must begin by understanding the role that marketing plays, its objectives and how these are accomplished, within NSMEs. In almost all cases, NSMEs had dedicated marketing coordinators or managers in charge of marketing and events. In Participant 9's case there was no dedicated marketing employee; rather, marketing was a part of the task list of someone with ownership of the business (i.e. founder, owner or president). As mentioned earlier and demonstrated through literature, this type of behaviour is typical within SMEs, as "entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur" (Gilmore, 2011). This implies that the entrepreneur (i.e. the business owner) is the person leading the marketing initiatives (Morrish, 2011). It was interesting to note that in Participant 10's firm, although there was a dedicated marketing employee, a CMO (Chief Marketing Officer), it was not he who was in charge of events, but rather, the CEO (Chief Executive Officer). Participant 10 explained to me that the tasks were divided as such, because the CMO was in charge of the marketing strategy and the marketing materials, which to him, excluded anything events related, as that was an operations task for the COO (Chief Operating Officer) and himself, the CEO:

*"[Interviewer: in terms of the organisation of being at all of these events, what role do you play (CEO) vs the role your CMO plays?] I think that marketing has played less of a role, its actually been operations, my operations co-founder whose been more involved. [Attending events] its more of an operational thing than it is a marketing thing. The marketing is the infrastructure that is already set and in place, so, our marketing should not change based on whether or not we attend this event or that event. Our marketing is sort of the materials and brand and everything that we do on a regular basis, that will definitely be conveyed to people who attend the event, but it shouldn't sort of depend at all on events. So, the marketing is not that involved. The main thing is to get all of the materials prepped and then execute on our marketing strategy, as they relate to those physical materials we have onsite... So, if you want to do a split, I would do it between operations and marketing. That would be sort of the split. And I would say, it's sort of almost 90-10 [in favor of operations]." – Participant 10*

In just one case, Participant 3's case, there was an actual marketing department with many employees in charge of marketing. Participant 3 explained to me that this was because she worked for an investment firm, who had invested in the NSME and thus she and her team were responsible for the NSME's marketing, until they were able and ready to do it themselves. In some of the NSMEs, there was more than just one employee tasked with marketing activities and in others,

just one. In most cases, marketing strategies and activities were not carried out alone and often times received support from other employees within the firm. Additionally, many of the NSMEs reported using external firms to support their marketing activities, such as: PR, graphics and event planning companies.

In terms of objectives with regards to marketing, consensus was found within the NSMEs, as the main objective was brand related. Here too, NSMEs claimed that branding went beyond just brand awareness, to encompass brand strategy and brand image. Participant 9 put this very simply for me, telling me that branding dictated everything they did, including their events. Participant 10 had a similar opinion with regards to branding, going into more details as to what exactly his branding strategy entailed: “...**our brand strategy**, as a company, **is what determines the way we interact with people everywhere**, not just at events, but it’s sort of **the mission and the general brand strategy that will say, that sort of determine well, what we’re wearing, how were talking to people, the sort of attitude we have, the kinds of material we have on spot...**”.

The second most popular objectives included: sales and marketing strategy objectives. With that said, Participant 1 had something interesting to say with regards to her marketing objectives, which included both brand and sales objectives: “[Interviewer: so, you mentioned that brand awareness was an important objective with regards to marketing, is there anything else that’s an objective?] The leads. The leads are, like, **brand awareness is great, but it doesn’t give us any money per say. It’s very indirect. The leads are direct.**” Other objectives which received some consensus as to their importance included: customer acquisition and promotional related objectives. In terms of marketing activities and platforms chosen to accomplish the marketing objectives, the two undisputable platforms were marketing events (naturally, as hosting and/or attending marketing events was a pre-requisite in order to participate in my study) and social media. Other popular platforms and activities included: public relations, influencers/brand ambassadors and newsletters.

Now that we have analyzed these various components of the overall marketing strategy, we can make comparisons to the event marketing strategy, based on the objectives. First off, NSMEs tended to have more objectives when it came to their marketing events, in comparison to their overall marketing strategy. With that being said, some of the most popular objectives from the marketing strategy – brand and sales objectives – were also present for the event marketing objectives. However, there were some inconsistencies between the two sets of objectives, where some objectives were present for the marketing events, but not for the overall marketing strategy. For example, all NSMEs claimed to have customer related objectives for their marketing events, but only Participant 7 claimed that those customer related objectives were also part of her overall marketing strategy. Similarly, business development objectives were often said to be objectives for NSMEs’ marketing events, but not at all for the overall marketing strategy. This goes to show that event marketing may not be considered as a part of the marketing strategy, but rather, as a strategy and activity on its own. This is contrary to event marketing literature, which demonstrates that event marketing is being used more and more, as the more traditional marketing and communication tools are becoming less efficient (Hede & Kellett, 2011). Event marketing

represents an alternative to traditional advertising mediums (Crowther, 2010a; Gupta, 2003; Tafesse, 2016) and rests within the domains of the marketing strategy (Crowther, 2011).

There were other similar inconsistencies, where most of the NSMEs claimed that business and relationship development, as well as customer related objectives were objectives for their marketing events, but very few of these NSMEs also claimed that they were objectives for their marketing objectives. Again, this demonstrates that event marketing may not be considered as a part of the marketing strategy, but rather, as a strategy and activity on its own.

In essence, my research on NSMEs, their overall marketing strategy and their event marketing practices tends to show that the two are not in synch and that the marketing events work on their own, independently from the overall marketing strategy. Therefore, the answer to my fifth research question would be that event marketing plays no role within the SMEs' overall marketing strategy; rather, it plays its own role, in parallel to the marketing strategy.

#### 5.12. New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing Manager's Role

My sixth research question was to determine the impact that the event marketing manager has on the EMPP. This was represented by a fifth component that I added to my EMPP model, based on the literature review. In the case of the NSMEs, the results were quite homogenous. As previously mentioned, in almost all cases, NSMEs had dedicated marketing coordinators or managers in charge of marketing and events. However, there were some exceptions to this. In Participant 9's case, where there was no dedicated event marketing employee, she as the founder was in charge of marketing. For Participant 10, who was the CEO of his firm, was also in charge of events, although he also had a CMO (Chief Marketing Officer). It was also interesting to learn that in most cases, whether or not there was an employee in charge of marketing events, decisions and approvals with regards to events came from high level management, such as a founder, owner or president. Therefore, the event marketing employee's role was limited to executing the marketing events chosen by their superior.

In terms of the education background and work experience of the people in charge of marketing events for NSMEs, the NSMEs which had a dedicated marketing and events employee mostly all had a marketing education from university. The NSMEs which did not have a dedicated marketing and events employee, where someone with ownership was in charge, mostly did not have any formal marketing education. They did, however, at the very least have either a formal business education or relevant work experience with marketing. As well, it was interesting to note that none of the employees in charge of marketing events, whether it be a coordinator or an owner, had any formal event planning education.

In terms of relevant work experience, there were some interesting cases to note. For one of the NSMEs, seeing as how Participant 3 had many years of experience with marketing and events (10+ years) and thus held a director role, higher level management did not impose events on her; rather, she was the one in charge of making these marketing events decisions and only obtaining approval from the owners of the business; often times, these approvals were only budget related. As well, in the three cases where higher level management did impose event choices on their event

marketing employees, those three participants, Participant 1, Participant 4 and Participant 7, all had less than two years of relevant work experience. In terms of experience, Participant 10, who only had a bit of experience with the organization of events during his time at CEGEP, was finding events to be a bit of a challenge, as he was just beginning to get involved with them. He also mentioned several times throughout the interview that understanding how to organize events was a learning process and that his greatest challenge with regards to events was the unexpected, as he was new to the event world:

**“The biggest challenge is, you just don’t know, until you’ve seen an event and participated in it, if it’s a regular event, you just don’t know what to expect... So there are various factors that are kind of out of your control, so it’s always going to be a bit of a surprise to see just how successful an event it is.** And that’s the biggest challenge... Where you need some judgement, is saying: “do we want to be at this event or not?”, “will it be a fruitful use of our time?”, “will this be worth the number of hours put in, for the amount of potential impact we are getting?” And **that’s where experience comes into play** and where when you do an event, you can then measure the results of that event through various metrics and you know, decide whether: one, you wanna do that same event... and you’re going to decide whether you want to do similar events in the future, based on the results you got with one type of event, over time. **So, I guess it’s just a learning process, but, the most difficult thing, is evaluating the potential impact you’ll get and judging how much effort, time and money you wanna put into it, for the impact you will get from it.**” – Participant 10

The impact of the event marketing manager is noticeable throughout other parts of the results analysis as well. For example, where a marketing events budget is present and there is a marketing and events employee, Participant 1 and Participant 3 are in charge of managing their budget, while Participant 7 plays no role in managing the budget. It was very interesting to note that many of the event marketing managers claimed that organizing events was not a very difficult thing to do, that it was quite easy to do really, as long as it was done properly. For example, Participant 3 claimed that organizing events was a simple task, as long as you were well prepared and organized: **“C’est assez simple organiser des événements. Quand tu es bien organisé là, tu fais ton truc comme ça, puis dans le fond, il va nous falloir, tu joues ton scénario.** Qu’est-ce que t’as besoin à l’événement ? Ok j’vais avoir besoin de musiciens, j’ai besoin de si, besoin de ça. Quand est-ce qu’il faut que je les « book » ? **Et dans le fond, ton événement est « canné » [fait] assez rapidement.**” Participant 10 also shared this opinion with regards to the organization of events, saying that events were not rocket science: “...so **getting ready for it physically** and all that, **that’s not really an issue.** Like **it takes time, it takes effort and it takes some money, but it’s not rocket science.**” A very similar thing was said by Participant 9, who claimed that organizing events was a breeze when properly planned for:

“...maintenant, on veut vraiment s’assurer qu’on a vraiment assez de monde pour nous supporter, puis qu’on recrute assez de monde le jour de l’événement, puis que **les choses soient**

**mieux organisées et que les tâches soient mieux séparées** aussi le jour de l'événement. **Vraiment juste de mieux planifier là.** Parce que **si tout est bien planifié, c'est comme, « it's a breeze ».**"

– Participant 9

The last participant to comment on the organization of events was Participant 4, who when she described to me her EMPP, was very nonchalant about it. When she finishes by saying that they do a wrap up at the end of their events, she adds "and it's all good", almost like "that's it", implying that other than preparing for events, they are quite easy to roll out: "...**puis tu fais un wrap up, puis c'est beau.**" Participant 3 also had more insightful things to say about event planners, that in her opinion, she believes that people who organize events need to be a bit hyperactive, in order to do well: "Tsé ça prend, faut que tu sois, hyperactif. **Faut que t'aïlles un petit côté hyperactif, pour faire de l'événementiel. Parce que « you, you move stuff » !** Tsé les choses bougent, ça c'est comme, faut que tu sois **quelqu'un qui est capable de bouger de l'air dans le fond. Ça prend de l'énergie !**". When asked about his role in the organization of events, Participant 10 said that he played a very important role, as he wanted to control his events. Even when he hired out help, he felt almost afraid to leave the booth, in case the people he had hired were not capable of managing the booth without him:

"My role has been a generalist role. I've sort of been the most vocal, public face of our company. So for the foreseeable future, **I will be personally involved in events and I'm not yet comfortable not being there yet, as a founder, and I'm still at a point where I wanna control, the message that is delivered and eventually, when I've done enough of it myself, and my operations co-founder has done enough of them and we've prepared for enough of them, then we will be able to become more confident and having other people do it without our participation.** For the event we did recently, we hired two recent grads to help us out, but we were there to provide guidance, **even if we weren't always there at the booth, we were always not too far to sort of check-in on them and provide guidance and sort of help with the materials and everything... I'm just being where I need to be, to ensure [the company] is successful.**"

My sixth research question was to determine the impact that the event manager has on the event marketing planning process (EMPP). Based on my research on NSMEs, it is in fact the NSME business owners who have the most significant impact on the EMPP, as they control almost every aspect of the EMPP. This was evident through responses from not only business owners of NSMEs, but also from the interviewed event marketing coordinators who receive orders from above. The impact that the event managers have is more noticeable at the coordination and execution level, rather than the decision-making level, which was controlled by the business owners. I observed that the more experience an event manager had with events, the more autonomy and more decision-making power they had, which was demonstrated by Participant 3. Likewise, the less experience an event manager had, the less autonomy and decision-making power they had

and their tasks were focused more so on executing event tasks, as demonstrated by Participants 1 and 7.

As demonstrated by Participant 10's lack of experience with events, this seemed to negatively affect his firms' event operations. As well, NSMEs with the less experienced event managers (Participant 7 and 10) were the only ones to mention uncertainty, the unexpected and uncontrollable circumstances, with regards to their events. Lastly, event managers who had had unsuccessful events in the past and had learnt from their mistakes, demonstrated this through their latest event initiatives, as showed by Participants 9 and 10.

Based on these findings, I can concur with several authors that managerial behaviour should be taken into consideration as well, within the event marketing planning process (EMPP), as it does have an impact on how event marketing managers will approach, manage, create and plan their events (Ashill et al., 2003; Greenley et al., 2004).

### 5.13. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion

This third and final section will present a comparison between SME and NSME event marketing practices, thus addressing my seventh and final research question. To answer this question, I will address each of the previous six research questions individually and then draw a final conclusion at the end.

### 5.14. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: The Event Marketing Planning Process

To begin, my first research question was to determine whether or not SMEs and New SMEs (NSMEs) have a formal event marketing planning process and if so, if they need one in order to execute their marketing events. Based on my results, the majority of SMEs and NSMEs had an Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP), which leads me to believe that the EMPP is necessary and useful for the event marketing manager. However, it was surprising to find out that only two firms had an EMPP model like the one that I had developed and these were both NSMEs; the remaining SMEs and NSMEs had their own form of an EMPP. Although there were a few exceptions, firms who had no EMPP at all, it is clear from these results that both SMEs and NSMEs see the value and importance in having an EMPP.

### 5.15. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Marketing Events Objectives

My second research question was to determine why SMEs and NSMEs choose to use marketing events. Based on my research, the main reason why both SMEs and NSMEs choose to use event marketing, is because they believe it is one of the best, if not the best way for them to achieve one or more of their event objectives. With that being said, these said event objectives varied drastically from SMEs to NSMEs. If we first look at attended events, SMEs' main objectives to attending events were: sales, customer acquisition and product development objectives, whereas for NSMEs, their main objectives to attending events were:

business/relationship development and promotional objectives. It is interesting to see that these objectives are different, as the grand majority of attended events for both SMEs and NSMEs are trade show type events (i.e. the same type for both). This just goes to show that the SMEs and NSMEs have different objectives and motives in attending events.

The same goes for the hosted events. SMEs’ main objectives to hosting events were: customer acquisition and promotional objectives, whereas for NSMEs, their main objectives to hosting events were: brand awareness, customer and sales objectives. Here, the differences can be explained by the variety of hosted event platforms used for both SMEs and NSMEs; company launches, information sessions, cocktail parties, client events and sales focused events. Therefore, it is to be expected that objectives when hosting events would be different.

It is also interesting to note that SMEs and NSMEs seemed to have inverse and almost identical event objectives, with regards to their attended and hosted events (see Figure 5.15). Where SMEs said to have: sales, customer acquisition and product development objectives as objectives for their attended events, NSMEs claimed to have almost the same objectives for their hosted events: brand awareness, customer and sales objectives. Similarly, where SMEs said to have: customer acquisition and promotional objectives as objectives for their hosted events, NSMEs claimed to have almost the same objectives for their attended events: business/relationship development and promotional objectives. However, with this being said, I noticed that SMEs’ event marketing objectives tended to be more homogenous for attended events and more heterogeneous for hosted events. In contrast, the NSMEs’ event marketing objectives tended to be more homogenous for hosted events and more heterogeneous for attended events. This could in part explain why the event objectives were an inverse match (see Figure 4.15).

	Hosted Events Objectives	Attended Events Objectives
<b>SME</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer acquisition</li> <li>• Promotional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales</li> <li>• Customer acquisition</li> <li>• Product development</li> </ul>
	Heterogeneous	Homogenous
<b>NSME</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand awareness</li> <li>• Customer</li> <li>• Sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business/relationship development</li> <li>• Promotional</li> </ul>
	Homogenous	Heterogeneous

Figure 5.15 SME and NSME Hosted and Attended Events Objectives

In conclusion, SMEs and NSMEs choose to host and/or organize events for the same reason, as they believe it is one of the best, if not the best way for them to achieve one or more of

their event objectives. However, in terms of their actual objectives with regards to marketing events, they could not be more different.

#### 5.16. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Management of Marketing Events

My third research question was to determine how SMEs and NSMEs manage their marketing events. My goal in answering this question was not to give a simple black or white answer, but rather, to give insight on the management of event marketing. This proved to be a challenging question, as various questions needed to be asked of the participants, in order to understand how they globally manage their marketing events. The aspects which I have used to address this research question are the themes which emerged from my initial data analysis: the marketing events decisions, the choices behind the chosen marketing events, budget management, challenges related to hosting and/or attending events and means of communications for the marketing events. I will begin by showing the similarities between SMEs and NSMEs and then the differences.

In terms of similarities between SME and NSME event marketing management, in both cases, events were a popular choice, as firms felt it was one of the best ways to reach consumers and thus to achieve their firm specific objectives. In terms of challenges, both SMEs and NSMEs faced internal and/or external challenges, with regards to their event marketing initiatives. With that said, the most important challenge for both firms was to get clients and customers to attend events. Lastly, of the available communication channels to reach clients, social media showed to be the most popular platform.

In terms of differences between SME and NSME event marketing management, one of my main findings was that SMEs take part in a great amount of trial and error. In contrast, my results showed that NSMEs only took part in a moderate amount of trial and error. As mentioned, this propensity to take risks comes not only from a lack of SME marketing guidelines (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010) and limitations in terms of resources (i.e. financial and human resources), but also from a strong willingness to take risks and chances (Parrott et al., 2010) with the potential for high rewards. This is where NSMEs differed from the SMEs, with regards to risk. NSMEs definitely exerted more caution with regards to their marketing events and a more thoughtful and analytical approach. Perhaps, NSMEs were more averse to risk-taking measures, as they are newer and less established firms that have more to lose if things go badly when taking chances and risks. In contrast to the SMEs, which are older and more established firms, who are more willing to take these said chances and risks as they have less to lose.

My main finding for NSMEs was that they were very limited in terms of time (as a resource). Many of the NSMEs expressed difficulties such as: having enough time to properly organize events, finding the time to either implement events or implement event processes (like an EMPP, a budget or a calendar) and the proper time management of event schedules. In contrast, only a couple of the SMEs said to have the same resource limitation. Once again, this could be due to the life cycle of NSMEs and SMEs, where as a newer business, NSMEs do not have the budget to ease time management limitations and SMEs do. Additionally, often times, SME Participants



claimed to receive additional help from other departments within the firm when it came to event marketing, in contrast to the NSME Participants, who often had to do it alone.

To continue, SMEs were better staffed than NSMEs for event marketing projects and initiatives. Again, this could be due to the life cycle stage that SMEs are at, where they have more disposable income than NSMEs and thus can afford to hire more employees. However, in both cases, there was room for more event employees for the majority of firms interviewed.

It was interesting to discover that high-level executives of SMEs exercised a great amount of control and direction over their events, in contrast to the high-level executives of NSMEs, who exercised a normal amount of control and direction. Further, SME business owners had little to no event marketing experience and/or knowledge. As mentioned, this is a natural result of entrepreneurial marketing being driven by the entrepreneur (Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011). This also shows that SME business owners have less trust in their event marketing employees, in comparison to NSME business owners, who gave their event marketing employees a good amount of control over marketing and events.

In terms of the budget, almost all NSMEs had one, whereas only half of the SMEs did so too. This demonstrated that NSMEs saw more importance in having an events budget, than SMEs. This was partially explained by the fact that SMEs are more willing to take risks with their event initiatives and thus did not see the need for a budget. However, it is important to note that in the cases where no budget was present, decisions were still made on a “maximum amount of dollars to spend” basis or on a “assess event by event” basis.

Overall, based on these five aspects, I assessed that both SMEs and NSMEs managed their marketing events well, with some areas highlighted for improvement, specific to each firm type: reducing the amount of trial and error as well as having a budget for SMEs and improving upon time resource limitations for NSMEs. With that being said, we can clearly see that there are significant differences between SME and NSME event marketing management practices.

#### 5.17. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Evaluation of Marketing Events

My fourth research question was to determine how SMEs and NSMEs evaluate their marketing events. Similarly to the previous section, I will begin by showing the similarities between SMEs and NSMEs and then the differences. In both cases, SMEs and NSMEs measured their marketing events based on a set of predetermined event objectives. The most commonly evaluated event objective for both types of firms, was sales objectives. Additionally, both firms measured sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as part of their evaluation process. However, there were also some common areas of improvement for both SMEs and NSMEs, which included: reasons to evaluate, what to evaluate (measuring all of the event’s objectives) and implementing more aspects from Brown et al.’s (2015) framework.

In terms of differences, where SMEs conducted both an internal and an external evaluation process, NSMEs mainly only conducted an internal evaluation process. As well, the majority of the NSMEs claimed that their evaluation process could be improved, whereas only a couple of the SMEs claimed the same. I discovered that NSMEs were much more willing to make improvements

and/or changes, after evaluating their events, than the SMEs. As well, NSMEs in general brought about more improvements and/or changes to their event marketing practices, than the SMEs. This could be explained by the fact that as a newer business, your processes are less established and thus you have more flexibility and willingness to make improvements and changes, versus an older business, who is already used to operating in a certain way and may not want to risk bringing about changes.

Overall, I assessed that both SMEs and NSMEs evaluated their marketing events well, with some areas highlighted for improvement. For both types of firms, these highlighted areas of improvement were relatively the same, as both had very similar and limited evaluation process. As mentioned, this could be due to the fact that these firms are rather new at creating and/or implementing event marketing initiatives and/or the people in charge could be rather unfamiliar with events as well.

#### 5.18. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing's Role Within the Overall Marketing Strategy

My fifth research question was to determine the role that event marketing plays within the SMEs and the NSME's overall marketing strategy. To answer this question, we must begin by understanding the role that marketing plays, its objectives and how these are accomplished, within SMEs and NSMEs. I will first begin by highlighting the similarities between SMEs and NSMEs, then the differences and then I will directly address my fifth research question.

In both cases, results were mixed with regards to event marketing employees, where about half the firms had a dedicated event marketing employee and for the other half, it was someone with ownership of the business who was in charge of marketing events. This brings us back to the entrepreneurial marketing literature, where studies show that "entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur" (Gilmore, 2011). In both cases, there were some exceptions to the rule, where there were several employees in charge of events and marketing. In terms of objectives, consensus was obtained from SMEs and NSMEs that brand related objectives were the number one priority for marketing efforts.

A first point of difference between SMEs and NSMEs is the fact that generally speaking, SME event marketing employees received help and support from other co-workers when it came to their event marketing initiatives, whereas NSME event marketing employees did not. This could be due to the very limited resources that NSMEs have, where every employee working for the NSME already has their own task list or the fact that NSMEs do not have the budget to hire additional employees. It was interesting to learn that SMEs did mostly everything internally when it came to their marketing initiatives, whereas NSMEs outsourced to other firms. Perhaps it was less expensive to outsource than to do in-house. Going back to marketing objectives, although SMEs and NSMEs agreed that brand related objectives were the number one priority for marketing efforts, they did not see eye-to-eye on secondary objectives. SMEs' secondary objectives for marketing consisted of: customer acquisition, promotional and communicational objectives, whereas for NSMEs, theirs were: sales and marketing strategy objectives. This could also be

explained by the different life cycle stages that these two types of firms are at, where NSMEs are just starting out and see sales as a vital activity in order to continue doing business, whereas SMEs in general have stable or growing sales and thus can focus on other marketing activities.

Now that we have analyzed these various components of the overall marketing strategy, we can make comparisons to the event marketing strategy, based on the objectives. In both cases, SMEs and NSMEs had more objectives when it came to their marketing events, than to their overall marketing strategy. This means that in most of the cases, SME and NSME Participants would enumerate (i.e.) seven objectives for their marketing events, but then would only enumerate (i.e.) four for their marketing strategy. However, it is important to note that the most popular objectives from the marketing strategy – for both SMEs and NSMEs – were also present for the event marketing objectives. Another important observation was the fact that some of the more common objectives of the marketing strategy, were not part of the objectives for the marketing events.

In conclusion, I had previously determined that the SMEs and the NSMEs' event marketing practices were separate from their overall marketing strategy. Thus, the answer to my fifth research question is that event marketing plays no role in the overall marketing strategy; rather, it plays its own separate role. This is contradictory to event marketing literature, which stipulates that event marketing is part of the marketing strategy and is a marketing tool (Crowther, 2010a; Crowther, 2011; Gupta, 2003; Tafesse, 2016).

#### 5.19. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Event Marketing Manager's Role

My sixth research question was to determine the impact that the event marketing manager has on the EMPP. This was represented by a fifth component that I added to my EMPP model, based on the literature review.

Based on my results analysis, I identified that although some SMEs and NSMEs had dedicated event marketing managers, there were also cases where there were none and that higher-level management was in charge of marketing events. Additionally, even in the cases where there was a dedicated event marketing manager, they were generally solely in charge of executing orders and decisions that came from higher-level management. Therefore, I concluded that for both SMEs and NSMEs, it was in fact higher-level management who impacted the EMPP and they did so in a significant way, as they were in charge of very important decisions such as: event choices, objectives, budget and more. Therefore, higher-level management had a significant impact on the EMPP. The one area where I would say their impact was minimal, was in terms of the evaluation of their events, which they mainly left in the hands of their event marketing managers. However, they were the ones in charge of bringing about changes to their events, based on these evaluations.

My research shows that the impact event managers have is more noticeable at the coordination and execution level, rather than the decision-making level, which was controlled by the business owners. I also observed that the more experience an event manager had with events, the more autonomy and more decision-making power they had. Likewise, the less experience an

event manager had, the less autonomy and decision-making power they had and their tasks were focused more so on executing event tasks.

I can conclude that my research findings are in line with those of several other authors, who have done similar research on managerial behaviour and its impact on planning processes. It is important to take into consideration managerial behaviour, because of the impact it can have on the EMPP.

#### 5.20. SME vs. New SME Results and Discussion: Conclusion

This final section will address my seventh and final research question: what is the difference between an SME and a NSME's event marketing practices? In order to answer this question, we must review the answers to my six previous research questions.

To begin, my first research question was to determine whether or not SMEs and NSMEs have a formal event marketing planning process and if so, if they need one in order to execute their marketing events. I concluded that the majority of SMEs and NSMEs had an Event Marketing Planning Process (EMPP), which leads me to believe that the EMPP is necessary and useful for the event marketing manager.

My second research question was to determine why SMEs and NSMEs choose to use marketing events. I concluded that they choose to host and/or organize events for the same reason, because they believe it is one of the best, if not the best way for them to achieve one or more of their event objectives. However, in terms of their actual objectives with regards to marketing events, they could not be more different.

My third research question was to determine how SMEs and NSMEs manage their marketing events. I concluded that both firms managed their marketing events well, with some areas highlighted for improvement: reducing the amount of trial and error as well as having a budget for SMEs and improving upon time resource limitations for NSMEs. However, it was clear to see that there are significant differences between SMEs' and NSMEs' event marketing management practices.

My fourth research question was to determine how SMEs and NSMEs evaluate their marketing events. Overall, I assessed that both firms evaluated their marketing events well, with some areas highlighted for improvement. For both types of firms, these highlighted areas of improvement were relatively the same, as both had very similar and limited evaluation processes.

My fifth research question was to determine the role that event marketing plays within the SMEs and the NSME's overall marketing strategy. I concluded that the SMEs and the NSMEs' event marketing practices were separate from their overall marketing strategy and that event marketing plays no role in the overall marketing strategy; rather, it plays its own separate role.

My sixth research question was to determine the impact that the event marketing manager has on the EMPP. I concluded that for both SMEs and NSMEs, it was in fact higher-level management who impacted the EMPP and they did so in a significant way, as they were in charge of very important event marketing related decisions. Therefore, higher-level management had a significant impact on the EMPP. My research shows that the impact event managers have is more

noticeable at the coordination and execution level, rather than the decision-making level, which was controlled by the business owners.

To answer my seventh and final research question, although there were both points of similarity and difference between SMEs and NSMEs, these two firms are more similar than different, when it comes to their event marketing initiatives. These points of similarity include: their use of the EMPP, the ways they evaluate their events, the fact that event marketing operates separately from the overall marketing strategy and the significant impact that higher-level management has on the EMPP. The few points of differences between the two firms included: their objectives in using event marketing and the ways they manage their events.

## **6. Conclusion**

To this day, event marketing literature focuses on: its popularity, its utility as a marketing and communication tool and its relevance in the current marketing landscape. Similarly, SME literature focuses on the struggles SMEs face with regards to their marketing practices.

My study goes beyond these two topics, by presenting them together and thus not only does it contribute to event marketing literature, but to SME marketing literature as well. My greatest theoretical contribution is the discovery that both SMEs and NSMEs do not consider event marketing to be part of the marketing strategy. This goes against all event marketing literature, which presents marketing events as a new marketing and communication tool. A second important finding was the significant impact that higher-level management has on the EMPP. This supports previous research on the EMPP, which argues that management processes and managerial behaviour should also be taken into account. It further supports SME marketing literature, which demonstrates that SME entrepreneurial marketing is driven by the entrepreneur (Gilmore, 2011; Morrish, 2011). My third and final important contribution concerned SMEs and NSMEs. Although they are both similar and different when it comes to their event marketing practices and that they actually shared more points in common, there are still two very important points where the two types of firms differ: their objectives in using event marketing and the ways they manage their events. This signifies that in terms of event marketing guidelines, SMEs and NSMEs require their own separate guidelines.

Other contributions to literature include: the fact that the majority of SMEs and NSMEs had a form of EMPP reinforces previous event marketing planning literature that shows the importance of the EMPP. The fact that SMEs and NSMEs choose to use marketing events mainly because they both see it as one of the most effective tools in achieving their goals, objectives and customers; this also contributes to previous research on the momentum that event marketing is gaining nowadays, as a popular marketing and communication tool. The fact that both SMEs and NSMEs manage their events well, but with certain areas to improve for each firm type: reducing the amount of trial and error as well as having a budget for SMEs and improving upon time resource limitations for NSMEs. Finally, that both SMEs and NSMEs have limited evaluation

processes when it comes to evaluating their event marketing initiatives; this does not reflect previous research on the topic, where complete evaluation models have been presented.

In essence, the majority of my research supported previous findings that SMEs lack specifically tailored marketing and event marketing guidelines for their business size. For example, there are models out there for event marketing, such as the EMPP and Brown et al.'s (2015) evaluation process. However, perhaps Brown et al.'s (2015) model is an example of a tool which is ill suited to SMEs. This presents a first opportunity for further research, to test whether or not this evaluation process model is suitable for SMEs or if it only applies to larger event marketing businesses.

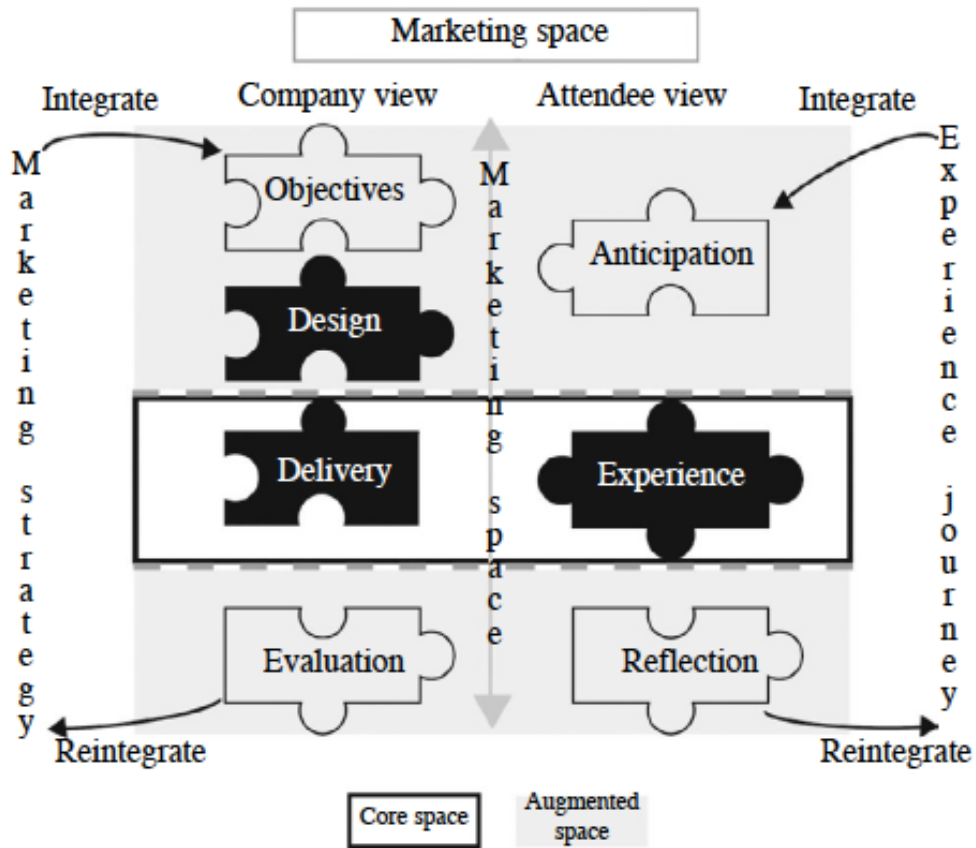
Another useful event marketing guideline could be a general checklist, which SMEs and NSMEs could incorporate into their EMPP, for the less experienced event marketing managers. This suggestion is based upon the fact that several event marketing managers and business owners showed a certain level of uncertainty towards their own event marketing practices.

Otherwise, my research does provide insightful information for SMEs and NSMEs wishing to partake in event marketing activities. As shown, the EMPP proved to be useful for the majority of interviewed firms, thus providing a first example of a useful tool for event marketing managers. My research also demonstrated the significant impact the business owner can have and does have on the EMPP. Perhaps this can guide other business owners and shed light on their own business practices. The fact that the majority of participants did not align their event marketing practices with their overall marketing strategy also demonstrates to other managers that there is a misalignment here, which they may also have. This presents a second research opportunity, where current marketing literature shows that event marketing is part of the overall marketing strategy; perhaps it is not. My research also demonstrates to managers the importance that my participants attributed to event marketing and the benefits that they could also draw from it.

One of the limitations to my study is that not all interviews were done in person; some were done over Skype and one by email. This was due to the very busy schedule of the participants, which did not allow them to meet me face-to-face. This is a limitation, as I was not able to create a personal connection before the interview began. As well, this influenced the way the interview went, as sometimes, I probably missed some opportunities to further probe participants, based on their reactions.

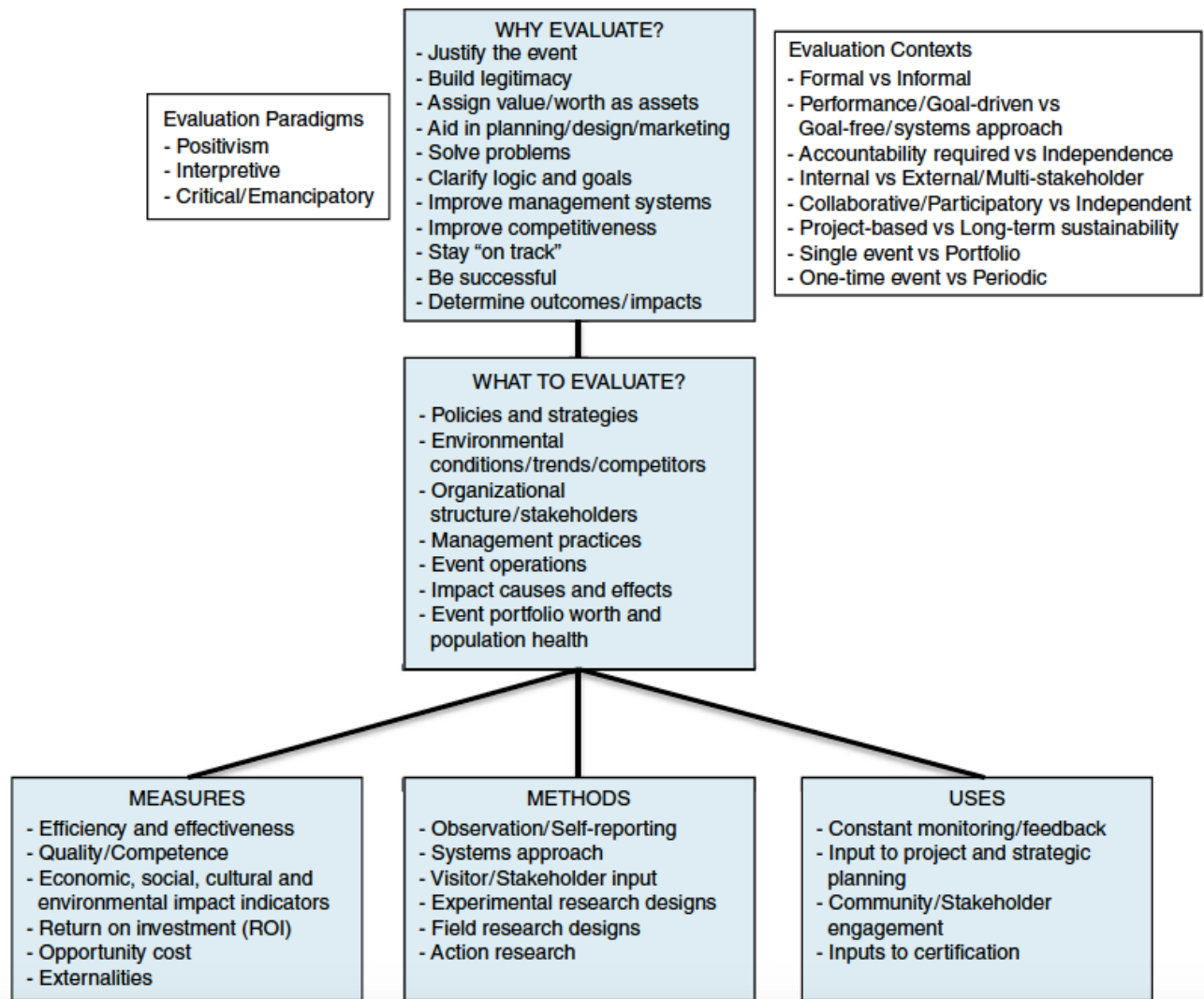
## Appendix

Appendix I: The “Marketing space” conceptual model (Crowther, 2011)





Appendix II: A model of the evaluation process (Brown et al., 2015)





## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

Hi,

My name is Elise, I am a master student at HEC Montréal and I have created this interview for my thesis. This research project has many objectives, which include: understanding why SMEs use event marketing or marketing events or event management, how events are managed and how success is measured.

I would like to interview people who work for SMEs and new SMEs and who organize events for their company. During this 35 to 60 minutes interview, I will address several topics like: (1) your company, (2) marketing in your company and (3) the use of event marketing and event management in your company.

My goal is to better understand the utilization of event marketing and event management by Montreal SMEs, so there are no bad or wrong answers. All answers will remain strictly confidential, as the names of the companies and the names of the employees interviewed will remain confidential and anonymous. Your company will only be referred to by the industry that you operate in and the interviewee by his or her job title. Therefore, no information on the company or the employees will be revealed and the results that I will obtain throughout my interviews will only be used for the purpose of my research project. This interview will be taped and transcribed, in order to conduct an in-depth analysis. Before we begin, I would like to know if you understand the conditions which have been listed and if you accept to continue your participation in this research.

Do you have any questions?

## **PART 2: THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEW**

Company's industry:

Job title of interviewee:

Location:

Date:

Time:

Duration:

## **PART 3: THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **3.1: Interviewee & Company**

- What does your company do?
- About how many people work for your company? (size of firm)
- In which year was the company started?
- At what stage of the life cycle is your company at?
- How long have you been working here? Always under the same job title?
- What is your level of experience with marketing and with event planning?
- Do you have any formal marketing or event planning education?

### **3.2: Marketing**

- Is there a marketing department or someone in charge of marketing for your company?
- Do you take part in the marketing tasks of the company?
- What role does marketing play within your company?
- What kinds of marketing activities does your company take part in? (social media, branding, event management, etc.)
- What are your company's objectives, with regards to marketing?

### **3.3: Event marketing**

- Does your company host events or attend events, or both?
- How many total events do you organize and/or attend per year?
- Do you have a predetermined event calendar for the year?
- What types of events do you organize/attend?
- How do you go about choosing which events you will do?
- Who contributes to the selection of events?
- Why does your company organize/attend events?
- What are your company's objectives, with regards to events?
- Why did you chose to organize/attend this particular event, in order to achieve your objectives?
- What is the overall event marketing planning process like?
- What role do events play within your company?
- What role do you play in the organization of events?
- When you organize/attend events, do you do it alone or with others? With whom?
- How are your events managed?
- Do you have a budget for events?
- By who is it managed?
- By who is it established?

- What is the approximate distribution of your budget amongst the different events?
- Do you ever get any sponsors for your events? How are they managed?
- How do you inform your end users of your events?
- What level of importance is given to events within your company?
- What are the challenges related to the organization of events?
- How do you evaluate your events?
- How do you measure the success of your events?
- Do you survey your event attendees in order to get their opinions?
- Are you satisfied with the outcomes of your events? What are your sources of dissatisfaction?
- What would you change about your past event experiences or what changes have you already made?

Thank you very much for your time. As promised earlier, all of your answers will remain strictly confidential and will only be used for my research project. If you would like to obtain the results of my research, you can leave me your email address so that I can share them with you at the end. Thanks again and have a great day!

## **PARTIE 1 : INTRODUCTION**

Bonjour,

Je me nomme Elise, je suis une étudiante à la maîtrise à HEC Montréal et j'ai conçu cet entrevue pour mon travail de recherche pour mon mémoire (ma thèse). Ce projet a plusieurs objectifs, dont : comprendre pourquoi les PME utilisent le marketing événementiel ou l'événementiel tout court, comment le marketing événementiel est géré et comment le succès est mesuré.

J'aimerais interviewer des gens au sein de PME et nouvelles PME, qui organisent des événements pour leur compagnie. Lors de cette entrevue d'une durée de 35 à 55 minutes, j'aborderai plusieurs thèmes dont (1) votre entreprise, (2) le marketing au sein de votre entreprise et (3) le marketing événementiel et l'organisation d'événements au sein de votre entreprise.

Je souhaite mieux comprendre l'utilisation du marketing événementiel ou l'événementiel tout court, par les PME Montréalaises, donc il n'y a aucune mauvaise réponse. Toutes les réponses demeureront strictement confidentielles, car les noms des entreprises, ainsi que ceux des employés interviewés resteront confidentiels et anonymes. Je révélerai seulement l'industrie de la compagnie et le poste de l'employé interviewé. Donc, aucunes informations sur la compagnie seront divulguées et les résultats que j'obtiendrai à travers mes entrevues serviront exclusivement à mon travail de recherche. Cette entrevue sera enregistrée et retranscrite afin d'effectuer une analyse en profondeur. Avant de commencer, je souhaiterais savoir si vous avez compris les conditions qui ont été énumérés et si vous acceptez de continuer votre participation à cette recherche.

Avez- vous des questions ?

## **PARTIE 2 : LE CONTEXTE DE L'ENTREVUE**

Poste de la personne interviewée :

L'industrie de la compagnie :

Lieu :

Date :

Heure :

Durée :

## **PARTIE 3 : LE QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **3.1 : Interviewé & l'entreprise**

- Que fait votre compagnie?

- Environ combien de personnes travaillent dans votre compagnie? (grandeur de l'entreprise)
- La compagnie fût fondée en quelle année?
- À quel stade de vie est votre compagnie?
- Cela fait maintenant combien de temps que vous travaillez ici? Toujours au même poste?
- Quel est votre niveau d'expérience avec le marketing et puis l'événementiel?

### **3.2 : Le marketing**

- Est-ce qu'il y a un département marketing ou une personne en charge du marketing?
- Participez-vous aux tâches marketing de votre compagnie?
- Quel rôle joue le marketing au sein de votre entreprise?
- Quels types d'activités marketing est-ce que votre compagnie utilise? (médias sociaux, branding, événementiel, etc.)
- Quels sont les objectifs de votre compagnie, par rapport au marketing ?

### **3.3 : Le marketing événementiel**

- Est-ce que votre compagnie organise ses propres événements ou participe-t-elle à des événements, ou bien les deux?
- Combien d'événements au total organisez et/ou participez-vous par année?
- Est-ce que vous avez un calendrier d'événements prédéterminés pour l'année?
- Quels sont les types d'événements que vous organisez et/ou auxquels vous participez?
- Comment choisissez-vous les événements que vous allez faire dans une année?
- Qui contribue à la sélection de ces événements?
- Pourquoi votre compagnie organise-t-elle/participe-t-elle à des événements?
- Quels sont les objectifs de votre compagnie, par rapport aux événements ?
- Quel est le processus de planification d'événements au sein de votre compagnie?
- Par quoi commencez-vous?
- Quel rôle joue l'événementiel au sein de votre entreprise?
- Quel rôle jouez-vous dans la planification d'événements?
- Quand vous organisez/participez à des événements, est-ce que vous le faites seul(e) ou avec d'autres? Avec qui?
- Comment est-ce que vos événements sont gérés?
- Avez-vous un budget pour les événements?
- Par qui est-il géré?
- Par qui est-il établi?
- Comment se répartit le budget pour les événements différents?
- Avez-vous des commandites pour vos événements des fois?
- Comment informez-vous votre public cible de vos événements?

- Quel niveau d'importance est attribué aux événements dans votre compagnie?
- Quels sont les défis liés à l'organisation d'événements?
- Évaluez-vous vos événements?
- Comment mesurez-vous le succès de vos événements?
- Est-ce que vous sondez les personnes qui viennent à vos événements pour avoir leurs opinions?
- Êtes-vous satisfait avec les résultats de vos événements? Quelles sont les sources d'insatisfaction par rapport aux événements?
- Que changeriez-vous de vos expériences passées avec les événements ou quels changements avez-vous déjà apportés?

Merci beaucoup pour votre temps. Tel que promis au tout début, toutes les réponses demeureront strictement confidentielles et serviront exclusivement à mon travail de recherche. Si vous aimeriez obtenir les résultats de ma recherche, vous pouvez me laisser votre adresse courriel pour que je puisse les partager avec vous à la fin. Merci et bonne journée!

## Appendix V: Snapshot of coding chart for results

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
2	<b>CODING OF RESULTS</b>													
3		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	Notes
4	<b>A. The company</b>													
5	NSME													18
6	SME													
7	<b>B. Marketing within the firm</b>													
8	presence of an employee responsible for marketing													8
9	presence of a department responsible for marketing													
10	exec in charge of marketing													
11	no designated marketing person in charge of marketing / no department													21
12	Marketing done with others													
13	Marketing done alone													
14	Support from other departments													1
15	Receives marketing support from an external firm (graphics, PR, etc.)													
16	Everything done in-house													
17	<b>1. Role of marketing and its objectives:</b>													
18	-> create brand awareness													9
19	-> promote new products to clients													9
20	-> communicate information to clients (new products, industry trends, etc.)													
21	-> support to sales efforts													9
22	-> support events													
23	-> branding													
24	-> create website													
25	-> create graphics													
26	-> define positioning of the company													
27	-> market research													
28	-> generate traffic													
29	-> to be reknown (notoriété)													
30	-> generate sales													
31	-> to put a spotlight on the brand													
32	-> get new clients													

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