

REACHING A STABLE CUSTOMER BASE

Defining, attracting and retaining repetitive customers in the events industry

Research Justification



Executive Summary

The following research justification focuses on the potential of Be Event Group to find and retain returning customers. As the company has experienced a transition period during Covid, it has now changed its strategy to a differentiation strategy, while also looking to change its customer base towards more loyal customers. The research conducted for this matter is based on 6 information gaps identified: (1) the type of companies that might become stable customers for Be Event, (2) management expectations of the new target group (stability and profitability), (3) criteria for companies to choose their event partner, (4) the events that are most likely to be appealing for the desired target group, (5) methods of reaching this new target group, (6) methods of retaining this new target group.

This research considers an abductive strategy, which is a strategy that seeks to find the best explanation in order to highlight surprising facts identified in beginning of the research. (Bryman, Bell, p.27) In this specific case, the research is structured into two different parts. The first part is represented by the exploratory phase, where the aim is to define the target group to be reached. During this phase of the research, internal and external interviews were conducted, while the findings collected have been afterward verified using internal and external desk research. In the second phase of the research, regarded as the applied phase, external desk research has been used to determine the best ways to attract the new target group previously identified, while observations were conducted in order to understand how the company can retain its stable customers.

The results of this report have revealed that currently the potential stable customers for Be Event Group can be divided into four categories that can fulfill management's expectations about stability and profitability. Furthermore, interviews with the already stable customer of the company have shown that there are particular aspects that this type of companies are looking for in their event partner, such as reliability and professionalism, while the events that are most appealing for the target group differ from a category to another. From the applied phase, it has resulted that the company might attempt to target this new customer audience digitally and physically as well. Last but not least, the importance of special attention for retention has been determined, while the observations conducted have underlined the focus points for the company. Based on the results achieved, four recommendations have been determined in order to help the company find and retain stable customers:

- a) Create an SEO Plan to address to and retain the new target group.
- b) Increase awareness on social media
- c) Consider account management on long-term
- d) Cross-selling opportunities with Fletcher Hotels' customers

While the former two recommendations concerned with improving the digital landscape have immediate applicability and are mainly focused on attracting the new audience, the latter two are designed to help the company towards maintaining a stable customer base on long-term. In conclusion, the above-mentioned recommendations aim to help Be Event Group aligning its customer base to their current strategy, therefore heading to a more stable business environment. The first and the third recommendation, as they are listed above, have been translated into the professional products that have been delivered to the company, in the form of an SEO plan and a Key Account plan.

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
FTE	Full-time employees
TPS	TPS Groep, one of the current stable customers of Be Event Group
NIBC	NIBC Bank, one of the current stable customers of Be Event Group
CTR	Click through-rate
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SERP	Search Engine Results Page

1. Preliminary Research

The purpose of this chapter is to offer background information on the company and the problem that is being researched upon. Furthermore, this chapter also covers the information gaps that have been identified and the questions that will be used to fill in these gaps. Last, but not least, the project aim will be thoroughly explained.

1.1 Company Analysis

Be Event Group is operating in the corporate events industry, organizing corporate outings and team building events. Be event Group's product offerings is divided in 6 categories: city games, tours, beach games, winter games, meetings and special events. Each category contains different games that are being organized at several locations within the Netherlands. For a clear overview, check the company's website via the following link: <https://beeeventgroup.nl/en/>.

The company has two offices, one in Rotterdam and one in The Hague. Be Event Group was founded in 1996 and has had many other names since then. According to the company's CEO, Mr. Arthur Bol, the company started its operations before the internet era, by advertising its events in the yellow pages of the newspapers. In time, the company has built its own capabilities and was required to adapt in the digitalization era. The company grew gradually, while their experience and network helped them to become an important player in the events industry in the Netherlands.

In 2019, Be Event Group has registered a total revenue of 467,893.9 Euros, when the company was composed out of two partner managing directors, one operational manager and one event manager who were working closely with the two managing directors. Moreover, the company had 20 part-time instructors for the events. Due to the small number of employees, the company has always had a flat structure, which facilitates coordination and communication improving the decision-making process, which is very important in this type of industry because of the fast-paced changing environment, requiring fast decision-making and constant progress.

As the COVID occurred, the company found itself in need to reduce its staff. At this moment, the company is operating only with the two managing directors in the Netherlands, together with their partner in Spain. Moreover, the company is working with 2 interns every semester and is working with part-time employees to instruct the events.

The events industry is a fast-paced industry with tough competition, that requires constant innovation. Consequently, according to the two managing directors, Mr. Arthur Bol and Mr. Martijn Wessels, the company is now focusing on a differentiation strategy, with a clear commitment towards reducing their product offerings size to only unique events which are hard to be imitated. What makes this possible is the good supplier relationship that the company has and the materials that the company possess. As an example, at the office in Rotterdam, due to their agreement with the Fletcher Hotels, the company has access to multiple meeting rooms and a hangar that can host events for more than 100 people. Furthermore, what helped the company so far in the pursue to differentiate from their competitors is the professional attitude, which means the attention to details and flawless organization the company is providing for every client, but also the outstanding sales skills of the managing director, Mr. Martijn Wessels.

1.2 Problem analysis

In order to provide a clear overview of the problem that will be researched by the student, a fish-bone diagram will be used as it can be seen in figure 1.1. This diagram has as a purpose to illustrate and create a visual and structured way showing how different causes led to a specific problem, by having the causes stated as the bones of the fish and the problem as the head of the fish.

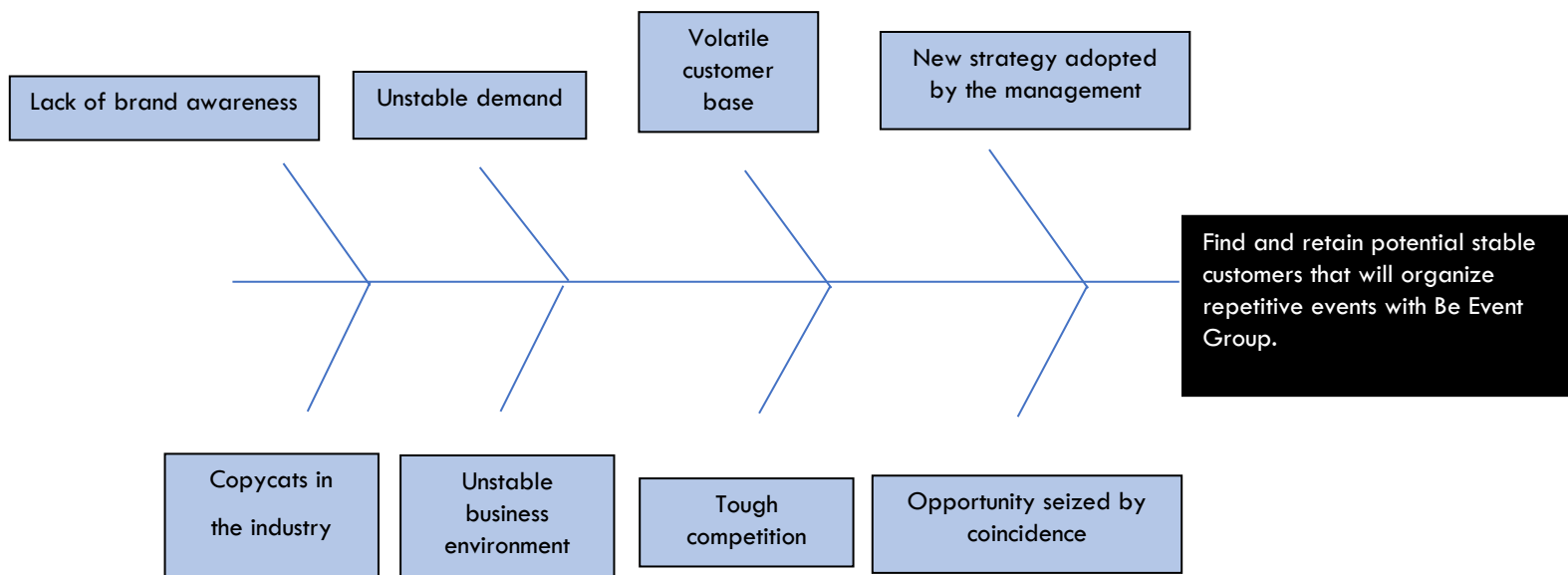


Figure 1.1 – Fishbone Diagram

The problem is represented by the management ambition to step forward and reposition themselves on the market, therefore improving the current customer base of the company, which is at the moment very unstable in terms of demand, meaning there might be months with a very high demand for events and months with very few events demanded. Furthermore, current customers are also volatile regarding the events they organize, meaning that changes in the events' schedule, changes in the number of participants or cancelations occur even after the event is confirmed. While the main problem directly has an influence on the company itself, it is especially a serious issue for the two managing directors of the company, who wish to increase the brand awareness_towards a stable customer group that would organize repetitive events with Be Event Group. This means that once a potential stable customer is reached, Be Event Group needs to be sure that he will remember the company and he will know how to return.

This challenge is viewed as an opportunity for the company to align its customer base to the new strategy adopted, respectively a differentiation strategy, offering a narrower range of events perceived as unique, with potential of turning into a differentiation focus strategy, therefore differentiating itself from the copycats in the industry. Currently, this issue is observed in the daily operations of the company. As the team is totally managed by the two managing directors with the support of the interns the company is working with every semester, an unstable customer base most of the times create inconvenient situations, such as internal miscommunications or ineffective planning, that affect the company's productivity and create an unstable environment for the business.

This problem was noticed once the company has discovered that there might be a more appealing target group to address to, in times when competition became stiffer, and the market share is split between many competitors. According to the company's managing director, Mr. Arthur Bol, this opportunity was seized by coincidence as Be Event Group started to do business with two companies, respectively NIBC and TPS, which proved to be stable customers for the company.

1.3 Information Gaps

In order to understand and define the potential stable customers for Be Event Group and then concluding how the company could find and retain these categories of customers, six information gaps have been considered. These information gaps have led to the formulation of sub-questions that will contribute answering to the main research question as it can be seen in 1.4.

Information gaps:

1. The type of companies that might become stable customers for Be Event Group

For this information gap, information about the potential typology of a stable customer is being researched.

2. Management expectations of the new target group (stability and profitability)

To fill in this gap, internal interviews will define the expectations of the management

3. Criteria for companies to choose their event partner

It is important to find out what are the traits that potential stable customers are looking for before deciding how these customers can be reached.

4. The events that are most likely to be appealing for the desired target group

This is important so the company can understand to what extent is their current product offering in compliance with the target group's expectations.

5. Methods of reaching this new target group
6. Methods of retaining this target group

For the last two information gaps in order to find a solution for the current problem, the research will focus on potential methods to attract and retain the new target group.

1.4 Main Research Question and Sub-Questions

As a result of the problem analysis, the main research question has been established.

Main Research Question

How can Be Event Group attract and create long-term relationships with companies that organize events frequently, therefore representing potential stable customers?

Sub-Questions

In order to find an answer for the information gaps considered and ultimately answer the main research question, eight sub-questions were designed.

Information Gap 1

1. What is the exact profile of this target group that Be Event group is trying to attract and retain?
2. How does the desired customer base differ from the current one?

Information Gap 2

3. How should the new customer base look like in order to fulfill the company's expectations in terms of stability and profitability?

Information Gap 3

4. What are these companies' criteria when choosing a business partner for organizing corporate events?

Information Gap 4

5. What type of events or activities does the new target group prefers?

Information Gap 5

6. How can Be Event Group create a network in which this type of customers can be reached?
7. How can digital marketing techniques contribute towards reaching this target audience?

Information Gap 6

8. Once a potential loyal customer organizes an event with Be Event Group, how can retention be maximized?

1.5 Project aim

The following problem, as well as the research that will contribute towards finding a solution for it, fit within the field of Marketing & Sales, as the problem requires clearly defining the customer base the company wants to attract and then find ways to attract this typology of customers and keep them retained, therefore developing a marketing plan to create value for the company's customers (TWM15). Moreover, on top of the effort to define and reach this target group, the student will also incorporate developments of the digital landscape, respectively SEO optimization, in order to address to that specific group. (TWM17)

The project aim is to clearly define the new customer base the company is aiming for and find solutions to attract this type of customers. The success of this project can be measured by assessing how many potential loyal customers will be reached until July 2022 and how many of this type of customers can be reached and retained by July 2023. This project is achievable as the company has recently changed its strategy and has started to focus more on its unique and non-imitable services. Therefore, this project comes as a complement to the company's commitment to a differentiation focus strategy, while the student will combine different research methods in order to align the company's customer base with the strategy and increase the company's brand awareness.

With the new vision of the company, this goal represents a very important step towards creating a stable environment for the company both in terms of profitability and demand. Following the research the student will conduct, it is expected that the company's customer base will be represented in proportion of 50% by loyal, stable and reliable customers starting from 1st of June 2023 at the beginning of the summer season, which is usually the busiest in the events industry.

A potential solution, which is illustrated in the first professional product, is represented by an SEO plan, which will focus on a blog section meant to target this specific target group. Every blog post will focus on a specific set of keywords that were identified as having a high potential of reaching the new target group. Using digital platforms such as Google Search Console and Google analytics, the company will be able to measure how every post has performed, and how the traffic on the website has improved. This solution is achievable as the company has the sufficient expertise to set up this project, while it is also feasible due to low initial investment. Because most of the company's customers have been reached via the company's website, this development will prove great results in targeting new customers. This blogging schedule will have the company post a blog post once in two weeks, while the results will be analyzed monthly. After 6 months, the potential of this idea will be reassessed and the possibility of creating a totally new section on the home page will be considered.

A second potential solution, which is illustrated in the second professional product is represented by a key account plan. This solution is meant to help the management create value for and nurture their relationships with their valued customers. This solution will help the company on long-term, to keep a record of objectives and actions plan for their stable customers. This solution is achievable, as due to his vast experience in sales, the managing director Martijn Wessels will be mainly responsible to keep track of the objectives of preferred customers and update this key account plan. Once a part of the customer base will be represented by stable customers, this key account will be essential towards retaining them. Therefore, by the end 2022, the management could already update the key account plan with the new objectives discovered, and with potential new typologies of customers fitting in the desired target group than the ones already identified.

2. Research Approach

The research process will be divided in two parts: the first part is represented by exploratory research, which will be conducted in order to understand and clearly define a problem that has not been studied thoroughly. In this type of research, the initial idea serves as a medium in order to spot further issues. (George, 2022) This type of research is particularly important for the company as the problem studied is not very precisely defined by the management team. In the second part, the focus will be on applied research, as after defining and understanding the problem, solutions need to be identified and eventually implemented.

In the following paragraphs, each research method will be analyzed, underlining how and why every method will be used and how it is linked to the corresponding sub-question. For a clear overview of how every research method is linked to every sub-question, see Appendix A. Furthermore, the planning for the research activities conducted can be found in Appendix B

2.1 Desk Research

2.1.1 Internal

For the purpose of this study, internal desk research plays a crucial role for the both parts of the research, as it firstly helps defining the problem, answering sub-questions 2 and 3 by using current data sets and company's knowledge about the customers in this industry. Furthermore, it helps in the applied research part as the current performance of the company can be further analyzed, tracked and improved in the digital background. This way, it will contribute towards finding a solution in reaching this new audience, therefore helping answering to sub-question 7.

For the second and the third question, internal desk research concerns sourcing information from the company's database which would help comparing how the current customers differ from the desired customers of the company in terms of activities they organize and the size of the groups. Gathering information about past events will contribute towards being able to compare and analyze how a change in the customer base (the total number of current customers) will affect the company on both short and long term. On the other side, in order to answer the 7th sub-question, the current company's digital performance needs to be tracked analyzing the efficiency of the current keywords which influence website efficiency and traffic and other metrics such as retention, frequency and behaviour of the website users. This internal analysis will take place using the platforms Google Analytics and Google Search Console that will be linked to the company's website.

2.1.2 External

External desk research will also contribute to understanding the target group the company is aiming to reach. Moreover, external desk research is a crucial research method in the second phase of the research, as once the target group is clearly defined, external desk research will contribute towards finding a solution for creating a network where this type of customers can be achieved.

For the first question, as part of the exploratory research, information about corporations that organize timely events will be gathered. This will contribute towards defining this target group, and determining what kind of companies organize these frequent team-building events. This part of the research is meant to discover what are these company's size, industry they operate in and type of events they organize. For the second part of the research, information from reliable marketing websites and books will be extracted and analyzed so the study can conclude how to create a consistent way of reaching and retain customers. Furthermore, information about the use of the digital tools will also be extracted from external sources.

2.2 Qualitative Research

2.2.1 Interviews

This method is used to obtain data through open questions and by tapping into people's feelings and real beliefs. Unlike quantitative data, it does not focus only on what people think, but also on why they think that. The main method that will be used in order to gather qualitative data will be through interviews. Interviews play an important role, especially in the first part of the research process, where the student will conduct interviews with the two managing directors of Be Event Group in order to gain more insights about how the management defines this target group. These first interviews will have as a purpose to find out what is the current idea of a "stable customer" in the management view, what expectations does the management has in terms of profitability and how is the target group perceived at this moment regarding the type of companies that might fit into this pattern. These interviews will contribute towards answering the sub-questions 1,2 and 3.

Furthermore, interviews will be conducted with the organizing manager from TPS and the organizing manager from NIBC. These interviews have as a purpose to get a better understanding about the philosophy of the companies Be Event Group is trying to reach by gaining insights from two of this type of organizations. These interviews will focus on how these companies first reached Be Event Group, why did they choose Be Event Group, what type of events they organize, but also how frequently they organize the events. These interviews will help answering sub-questions 4 and 5.

After interviews are recorded, they will be transcribed into textual form so they can be further analyzed. A challenge that will require special attention from the student is the non-verbal communication that takes place during an interview. Therefore, indications of non-verbal communication from the audio-recordings will also be necessary.

The next step consists in examining and analyzing the content to get a clear understanding about the content of the transcripts. For a more accurate and organized work, interviews will also be coded and labeled in order to extract the most relevant information. After this step, a thorough analysis will follow, with the aim of extracting the key ideas and connect them with data acquired from the other research methods used.

2.2.2 Observations

Finally, observations will represent another way of gathering qualitative data. As Be Event is organizing an event with TPS every once in two weeks the presence of the student at these events is important in order to notice which attitudes or practices does the TPS management team appreciate and therefore lead them to continue organizing events with Be Event Group and what expectations do they have from the company. The observations will be made from the role of “complete participant” as the student will help the company towards instructing and organizing the events while making his own observations and connect it with the study. The main information expected to be gathered as a result of observations include the attitude of the organizer regarding the unfolding of the event, the interest of the organizer regarding the event/game rules/ participants’ tasks and the interest of the organizer regarding the satisfaction of the participants. This method will be used for answering sub-question 7.

The data collected through observations will be a combination between primary observations, which will take place by collecting notes about what was happening and what was being said, and experiential data, which is data on your perceptions and feelings as you experience the process you are researching. (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 290). The data will be collected in a structured way using checklists to assess the points of interest above mentioned. (see Appendix D)

2.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two very important factors to consider for any research. While validity measures how accurate are the results found and whether the research method measures what is supposed to, reliability implies making sure that data collected is consistent under the same circumstances.

2.3.1 External Desk Research

In order to ensure the validity, the data collected through external desk research will be collected from reliable, certified sources as every information gathered using desk research will be sourced from a credible publication or website. Doing so, the risk of the research being altered is decreased, and meaningful conclusions can be drawn at the end of the second research phase.

2.3.2 Interviews

Before conducting these interviews, there are several concerns that need to be tackled. One of them is reliability, which will be tried to be maximized by having a clear structure in the interviews. (see Appendix C) Furthermore, bias should also be eliminated for both the interviewer and the interviewee by making sure the right questions are being asked and a comfortable set-up is created for the interviewee. Finally, validity is also a concern which will be tackled by making sure the interviewees are well selected and have the required knowledge to contribute towards solving the research issue. (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 318).

2.3.3 Observations

Through observations, a high extent of validity can be assured as the observations are taking place in a natural context. Regarding reliability, the only factor that might affect the study can be the observer bias, as said by Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994:43) note, “we are part of the social world we are studying we cannot detach ourselves from it”. Consequently, the student will try to always keep an objective view upon the events. Complete confidentiality about the name of the person being observed will be kept for both the final conclusions and final results. Furthermore, the data collected from observations will be used only to generalize how Be Event Group can increase the retention when a potential stable customer is reached.

2.4 Limitations

One of the research limitations was represented by the low number of current customers that fit within the desired target group. Therefore, although interviews were conducted with the current returning customers of Be Event Group, the range of relevant interviewees was relatively low, which might have an impact on the reliability of the exploratory phase. However, as meaningful qualitative data was collected and was afterward combined with external desk research from reliable sources, valid and reliable conclusions could be drawn.

Furthermore, desk research had its limitations as well, as the digital analytics tools that were utilized for this research have not been set up by the company in advance, so some of the results could not be analyzed based on the same time period or using the same metrics.

Last but not least, another important limitation was represented by the observations conducted. Although observations sessions during the event at TPS were planned for the 29th of April, 20th of May and 3rd of June, only one observation session eventually took place. Because of not enough participants, the event on the 20th of May was canceled, while the one on the 3rd of June was postponed for the 10th of June and canceled eventually for the same reason. However, even if this incident might have had an impact on the reliability of this method, due to the structured way of collecting this type of data, and using the technique of triangulation by combining the data from observations with the data collected from external desk research, the results can be considered as valid.

3. Results

3.1 Typologies of potential stable customers

More and more companies have started to realize the importance of teambuilding and company outings, which can be considered as “the most important investment you can make for your people” (Scudamore, 2016). These outings have different purposes such as “having the staff become more productive, increase morale, reduce accidents in the workplace and bring down per employee health care costs “(Allen, 4).

The lack of retention represents a big current problem, which from the management view has two causes. The first reason is the lack of awareness of the participants, “only the person that organizes the outing will know the company’s name” (Interview 2, Martijn Wessels). The second reason stands in the fact that usually companies change the organizer from one year to another and every time “they want to do new, special things. They want to be unique so they will change scenery, they will change cities and they will change activities” (Interview 2).

Although some of the companies assign an event coordinator to take care of everything, other corporations create a committee to ensure various tasks are carried out (Carter, 17). For Be Event group an interesting target group with a high potential of retention is represented by the companies that have “an organizing committee with the same people every year in this committee” (Interview 1, Arthur Bol). This aspect was observed in one of the current customers of Be Event Group, specifically, NIBC. This company organizes a big event in the summer with Be Event Group, which makes them a significant customer, as they allow the company to take advantage of the economies of scale by organizing an event for 100-200 participants. Moreover, they offer the guarantee they will return the following year. This committee within the bank is called “My Leisure” and is composed out of NIBC’s employees “from all over the bank” who “like to organize events”. (Interview 4, George Suers)

The second type of customers that might become a potential stable customer group is represented by the companies that offer events as a way to reward their employees. The importance of rewarding employees is obvious for every company as it “improves organisational values, enhances team efforts, increases customer satisfaction and motivates certain behaviours amongst members of staff.” (Jones, 2019). Although, many companies are using financial rewards, there are also companies that use non-financial rewards to “boost performance and increase employees’ satisfaction”. (Le Ha, p.36). This pattern has been observed as well in one of the current customers of the company, TPS. This company is organizing an event with Be Event Group every once in 2-3 weeks as a mean to reward their trainees at the end of a training session, before they start a learning program of 2 years. (Interview 3, Jasmijn Klapwijk). The importance of these events stands in the fact that “you are creating a group, with whom you will work for the following two years in every workshop” (Interview 3).

A third category that might fit in this pattern are high-schools and universities. As Be Event Group already organized a big event for Hogeschool Rotterdam with 350 students, the same school has recently came back with a request for 800 people for this summer. The extremely large number of participants that they can bring have the potential to ramp up the economies of scale to a level which will make these collaborations very profitable as the managing director Mr. Martijn Wessels

has admitted: “schools have a lower budget, but the amounts of people are quite big” (Interview 2)

Another category that is currently considered is represented by the governmental facilities. It is a particularly interesting target for Be Event Group as it is a high-end customer looking for high-quality outings and events. Moreover, the demand from this typology of customers has considerably increased in the last months, especially because of Covid and how this situation changed the work environments to remote work “there are governments working with small teams and they need to see each other now and then” (Interview 2). However, although this type of customers seems very interesting for the management, the frequency of events organized and the guarantee of return is difficult to be measured in this case.

To answer the second sub-question, information from the company’s database has been analyzed. A major difference between the current customer base and the desired one, is the fluctuations in the demand. The following table shows the total number of events organized in 2019 combined with the first two months in 2022 after the Covid restrictions were released, respectively March and April. Table 3.1 is a result of internal desk research and shows the number of events organized every month, the number of participants and the type of events.

Month	No. of events	No. of participants	Average participants/event	Type of events
Mar-19	16	355	22,19	Winter events - 12/ Ipad games - 2 / Beach events -1 / Rides -1
Apr-19	13	223	17,15	Winter events - 9 / Ipad games - 2/ Rides -2
May-19	22	573	26,05	Winter events - 6 / Ipad games - 8 / Beach events -7 / Rides -1
Jun-19	24	931	38,79	Winter events - 2 / Ipad games - 12 / Beach events - 6 / Rides - 4
Jul-19	18	392	21,78	Winter events - 2 / Ipad games - 7 / Beach events - 7 / Rides -2
Aug-19	6	126	21,00	Ipad games - 2 / Beach events - 2 / Rides -2
Sep-19	28	721	25,75	Winter events - 5 / Ipad games - 13 / Beach events - 7 / Rides -1
Oct-19	22	680	30,91	Winter events - 10 / Ipad games - 12 / Beach events - 1 / Investigation game 3
Nov-19	48	1064	22,17	Winter events - 43 / Ipad games - 3 / Beach events -1 / Rides -1
Dec-19	83	1681	20,25	Winter events - 80 / Ipad games -3
Jan-20	38	775	20,39	Winter events - 34 / Ipad games - 3 / Investigation game -1
Feb-20	20	346	17,3	Winter events - 17 / Ipad games - 3
Mar-22	11	376	34,18	Winter events - 7 / Ipad games - 3 / Investigation Game -1
Apr-22	13	247	19	Winter events - 8 / Ipad games - 3 / Investigation Game -2 / Rides -2

Table 3.1 - Events organized by Be Event Group in the last normal operating year before Covid and the first two months after restrictions were released in 2022.

As it can be observed, the number of events fluctuates greatly from one month to another, which proves the volatility in the demand. An obvious example is the difference between December 2019, January and February 2020. While Be Event Group organized 83 events in December, there were only 38 the following month and only 20 in February. As Be Event changed its strategy to a differentiation strategy, this is also reflected in the number of events they organize now. As it can be seen, in March and April 2022, Be Event Group organized 11, respectively 13 events which is a satisfactory number of monthly events for the current strategy of the company. With no FTE and with a higher profit margin per participant than before, March 2022 and April 2022 were more

profitable than other months with considerably more events organized. This was also possible due to a big event organized in March with 200 people, that considerably increased the average participants/event for that month and which is a type of event that the company is constantly looking for. As concluded from internal discussions, the kind of companies that organize such events with these amounts of people are very likely to come back if the event goes well.

Therefore, the potential stable customers can be divided in four possible target groups as explained above. Furthermore, the main target groups to be reached will not bring additional events, as resulted from table 3.1, but rather will increase the number of participants/event and will organize preferred events for the company for which Be Event can add more value and consequently increase the profit margin.

3.2 Stability and profitability expectations

According to the management of Be Event Group a stable customer is a customer that comes back on average two times a year. According to Mr. Arthur Bol and to Mr. Martijn Wessels, this is the number of times a company is usually organizing company outings in a year. The number of participants in an event is also an important criterion for judging a stable customer in the management view, as a small company that comes back with 15 participants once every year could not be significant enough to be considered a stable customer. According to Mr. Martijn Wessels, a group of a minimum 50 persons that comes back every once or twice a year can be regarded as stable. One current example is the company NIBC Bank which organizes one event every year with Be Event Group for a group of around 200 people. On the other hand, another example of stable customer for Be Event Group is TPS Groep, a training company that organizes events only for 8-10 participants, but these events take place more frequently (once in 2-3 weeks on average). Therefore, stability from a management perspective concerns both the number of participants and the frequency of events organized and can vary from a customer to another.

However, full stability is impossible to be achieved in this industry as Mr. Arthur Bol admitted. The main obstacle is the fact that the majority of the companies are frequently changing the person or persons that are responsible for organizing these outings (NIBC Bank is also a stable customer because it has a committee responsible for organizing events that do not change from one year to another). Therefore, when another person becomes responsible for team-buildings and outings, he/she won't know the previous event partner and will start searching for one again.

As concluded from the internal interviews conducted, profitability is a very sensitive matter in this industry and very susceptible to any sudden changes. As Mr. Bol was suggesting, in case of any economic setbacks team-building events and outings are the most likely to be the first cut from any firm's budget. The whole Covid period gave the company time to rethink its strategy and has led the company to focus on a differentiation strategy. This change had also an important impact on the financial expectations of the management. As stated by Mr. Martijn Wessels, while before, it was a "must" to accept any request that was coming so the company can sustain itself, at the moment, the company is organizing only the events that have a high profit margin.

Therefore, in terms of stability and profitability, the management sees its ideal customer base as being a mix composed of stable customers and one-time customers. As already stated in the problem analysis, currently, the customer base is very volatile and financial expectations can never

be accurate because of changing demand. On the other side, a customer base composed only from stable customers will still represent a risk for Be Event Group as resulted from the internal interviews conducted. This happens because, by tailoring and customizing your events to meet the needs and expectation of specific customers, would make the company very vulnerable in case these companies would suddenly decide to change their event partner.

3.3 Criteria when choosing an event partner

Be Event Group has made efforts in the last years to differentiate itself from its competitors. As the company has switched its strategy to a differentiation strategy “we are going to set us apart from organizations that are competing on price” (Interview 2). As a result, the company efforts are also orientated to a specific target group “we want that price to organize an event and this is what we are going to ask for” (Interview 2). Consequently, the company is trying to be attractive for organizations that have this criterion when choosing their event partner, receiving high quality services.

The personal approach and the ability to be flexible in terms of events organized are important characteristics, especially for a training company like TPS “we mostly have relationships with smaller companies, because they are working with us, create something with us, not for us” (Interview 3). This aspect was also observed in the company’s efforts to create a good collaboration “we adjusted the game switching from the initial idea so we can create the game for 8-10 people” (Interview 2). Moreover, interviews have shown that another important factor is to have a “reliable partner” who can create “out of the box things” (Interview 4). As resulted from the interviews, a quality that both TPS and NIBC appreciate in the collaboration with Be Event Group is the fact that the company is working together with the client towards a successful event “they are always trying to think with us” (Interview 4); “they are people who think with us, create something with us” (Interview 3). Furthermore, TPS appreciates the communication saying that “the contact is good” (Interview 3), but also the fact that the participants finish the event with a sense of satisfaction “the people that do this event are happy” (Interview 3), while NIBC thinks that a big quality of Be Event Group is that they are “very professional” (Interview 4). This professionalism is reflected on how thoroughly Be Event Group takes care of planning for their customers, but also in the flawless organization of every event.

Consequently, reliability, professionalism, collaboration, good communication and out of the box thinking are the most important aspects that current stable customers are looking for and which Be Event Group can provide.

3.4 Events preferred

Due to the new strategy adopted, the product offering has also shrunk to the most profitable and unique events that the company can offer. Therefore, there are a couple of events that might appeal the new target groups identified.

Firstly, there are the iPad games which can be customized and developed based on the customer needs, so are suitable for long-term collaborations “iPad team building events with which we can do a leisure program but also insert educational challenges in the game” (Interview 1). A big

advantage of this event is that it can combine these challenges that have a specific purpose into a digital game, as “modern world is gamification at the moment” (Interview 1). Moreover, TPS Groep, which organizes an iPad Game in the Harbour of Rotterdam appreciates this kind of event because is “special and fun” (Interview 3), but also because it gives the chance to the participants to “explore the city” (interview 3). A point of improvement in this event is the closing presentation when a quick discussion about the photos and videos challenges takes place. As it represents a very exciting moment for the participants, an addition in which photos and videos “are on a big screen so you can see it with each other in the end” (Interview 3) would be desired.

Another attractive event for the new target group is represented by “Air Crash Investigation”, a game fully developed by the management team of Be Event Group, an investigation game unique and hard to be imitated. The big advantage of this is that it is based “on the venue where the Be Event Group office is located” (Interview 2) and it can be “combined with a meeting” (Interview 1).

Thirdly, another preferred event is represented by the Robinson game, which is a team-building activity on the beach. It has the potential of representing an interesting event for the new target group as most of the companies will organize a company outing before the summer break, somewhere in June, as it is the case with NIBC Bank, “and in summer they have a leisure program outside” (Interview 1). What makes it unique is the fact that is very hard to be imitated as it uses a lot of resources, but what makes it desired by the companies is that it is a very competitive type of activity and considerably helps to create bonds within the company. For NIBC a day at the beach is a perfect opportunity to offer their employees the opportunity to “have fun, relax and not thinking about work” while also, “see your colleagues in a different environment” (Interview 4).

Last, but not least, the events on the ice rinks should also be considered. As these events are the most popular during the winter season, the management consider this option for potential stable customers as well: “I think the potential is there to do something in the winter” (Interview 2). Recent agreements of the company with the ice rink management in Dordrecht have made this option even more interesting. As Be Event Group has reached an agreement to organize a combination of events on ice, these events are now potentially profitable for both parties, while the great advantage of this ice rink is that it is open all year-round.

To sum up, in terms of events preferred, these vary depending on the target group and the type of customers. While for training companies like TPS, an iPad game is the ideal event, for a big company such as NIBC, a big beach event is the most suitable. Furthermore, the importance of Air Crash Investigation is obvious for the company as it is a game that takes place at the office venue in a big hangar, while the ice games are essential as they are hard to be imitated, due to specific contracts with the ice rinks.

3.5 Methods of reaching the new target group

The first step towards attracting a new niche target group is to “understand your customers” and “identify their problems and desires” (Heyward, 2022). This represented an essential starting point in this research, while the exploratory phase particularly served this purpose. The interviews have revealed how much the management is valuing and trusting the company’s website, these beliefs being confirmed by the fact that current stable customers, TPS and NIBC, have also reached Be Event Group via the company’s website. While TPS “was searching on Google and then she saw Be Event” (Interview 3), NIBC has reached Be Event Group “also from the website”. (Interview 1)

Having a strong digital presence is essential for every company as the number of potential customers that can be achieved online are considerably higher than only attracting locally. (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). As the company has dropped paid advertising once the pandemic occurred, it is now through organic methods the company is attracting their customers digitally.

In order to answer the 7th sub-question, the digital performance of the company has been analyzed. As resulted from table 1, appendix G, a big percentage of the traffic on the company's website comes from organic search with 974 users from a total of 1,429 acquired between March-April 2022. In order to understand the traffic generated and its provenience, a Google Search Console account has also been linked to the company's website on the 11th of April 2022. The first results were concluded on the 3rd of May.

The first results present in table 2, appendix G show that much of the organic search that Be Event Group is attracting comes from keywords that include the name of the company or the old names of the company such as "be event group", "glope events" or "be event", but also the name of the activity followed by the city such as "curling amsterdam", "curling maastricht" or "buggy rijden zeeland".

On the other hand, as it can be seen in table 3, appendix G, keywords that have a bigger potential of addressing to the desired target group as resulted from the exploratory research, such as "bedrijfsuitje (company's outing)" or "teambuilding" do not have any clicks despite the high number of impressions. Although the company is experiencing a good ranking in the SERP proved by the high number of impressions, the number of clicks is still very low. The main reason for a low CTR in this case, is represented by the fact that the page does not contain content which is compelling enough for users to click. (Jozwiak, 2021). Therefore, the website does not currently engage sufficient users. Engagement and collaboration will increase loyalty and satisfaction and will then facilitate opportunities of a repeat visit. (Nevala, Page 1)

Additionally, complementary to a good SEO plan, Social Media presence is very important for every company, while it is specifically crucial for Be Event Group as it allows the company to "develop more targeted campaigns" (Vinerean, Page 31) Furthermore, it can "create a personalized experience for customers", attribute which resulted from exploratory research as being a very appreciated "people who think with us and create something with us" (Interview 3). Having the new target group known, it might represent an advantage for Be Event Group, as the company can orientate their social media efforts towards the pre-defined customers categories. (see 3.1)

Another opportunity for Be Event of attracting potential stable customers is represented by the venue where the company is located. The hotel owns a big number of facilities that are rented for corporations to hold meetings or workshops. This fact gives Be Event Group an opportunity of face-to-face networking, which has proven to be more "honest and transparent" and allows you to "connect at a personal level" (McKendry, 2017). However, this method has its own limitations as regular repeaters for Fletcher Hotels might prove not to fit the target group Be Event Group is aiming for, but nonetheless it is clearly a chance to increase brand awareness and spot opportunities when these occur. Furthermore, face-to-face networking is known as facilitating follow-up meetings and increasing the possibility of building more contacts. (Reddy, 2021)

To conclude this chapter, the current state of the company allows them to reach their new target groups both digitally, but also due to their physical network they have access to.

3.6 Retaining the new target group.

Retention is considered in most of the companies as being more important than the acquisition of customers. Customers now “demand a more engaging and personalized experience” (Jao, 2014), factor that has been observed also during one of the interviews. Mr. Suers from NIBC has admitted starting to organize events with Be Event Group doing small games in the beginning, while during the 10 years of collaboration it evolved into a personalized and engaging beach day with a variety of games integrated (Interview 4).

A main point of focus in retaining customers especially for a company providing services is to make sure that the delivery of the services is efficient (Isa, 2020). This means that the company should prove its professionalism as they have always done, by providing a flawless experience for the customers. Referring back to the qualitative data collected for the exploratory research this was also one of the points mentioned by Mr. Suers, the member of the events organizing committee from NIBC, saying that they are looking for an event partner who is reliable and acts professionally (Interview 4). Second of all, the first impression always matters, as only a simple thank you is sometimes decisive in the view of a returning customer (Baharudin Kadir, Shamsudin, Nurul, & Mohd, 2020).

Following the observations conducted from the position of complete participant at TPS, the following findings have been concluded. A first result highly corresponded with the information received from Mrs. Klapwijk showing the importance of these events towards giving the trainees the chance to “explore the city”. This fact has been noticed in the attitude of the organizing manager present at TPS office on the 29th of April. He was very interested in the routes the participants will take and the locations where the game will unfold. He wanted to see how the participants will be able to explore the city while experiencing this team-building event.

Another finding was represented by the attitude of the organizing manager regarding the technical aspects of the game. He wanted to understand how the iPad game works, what kind of challenges the participants will encounter and what type of gadgets are available to them. He was so impressed about these technical aspects that he even showed the game to other managers presents at the office.

Thirdly, from the observations conducted, the involvement of the managing organizer towards creating a nice experience for the participants was obvious. Moreover, he has made sure at all times that the teams are enthusiastic about the game by interacting with the instructors to check the location of the teams and the scores at that moment.

Last, but not least, the importance of a strict schedule was noticed in the observations, as it was from the interviews. The managing organizer was asking in the beginning when exactly does the event start. During the event he was constantly concerned about when the participants will return, if they will be in time and how much time the closing of the event will take. A transcript of the observations conducted based on a pre-defined protocol can be found as Appendix F.

Therefore, the observations during an event with one of the stable customers of Be Event Group have revealed several important aspects that make TPS return and organize repetitive events with Be Event Group. First of all, for this particular type of customer, it is essential that an event can include a fun factor such as exploring the city, create a sense of competition and teamwork between their employees and most importantly have this experience wrapped up in a structured way. Furthermore, the importance of instructors making sure that the participants are satisfied at all times is crucial. Lastly, a strict schedule and a proof of professionalism from Be Event Group is highly demanded and appreciated.

4. Conclusions

It can be concluded from the exploratory research that potential stable customers can be divided into several categories based on type of company, budget, number of participants, purpose and frequency of organizing an event. During this research, four categories of potential stable customers have been identified. These were: companies with a stable organizing committee for events, companies that organize timely events to reward their employees, government facilities that are starting to organize outings more frequently due to remote work and high-schools and universities which can bring a considerable number of participants. These four categories can be considered as potential stable customers for Be Event as they fulfill the expectations regarding the frequency of events organized and/or the number of participants they organize an event with. Furthermore, in terms of profitability, it is desired to have customers organizing preferred events that have a higher profit margin or have customers that organize events for big groups of at least 50-60 participants, so the company can exploit the benefits of the economies of scale.

Additionally, the main criteria for these companies choosing their event partner were reliability and professionalism. Moreover, a common requirement shared by the companies interviewed was the personal relationship they need to have with their event partner. A big advantage of Be Event Group is the involvement and commitment towards their returning customers. In terms of events organized, it can be concluded that there are certain events that are suitable for these customer categories as these can be both tailored to the customer needs, while they can be regarded also as preferred events from a management perspective.

From the applied research phase, it can be determined that Be Event Group should focus their efforts towards both digital and physical activities in order to attract this new niche target group. As engagement is the first step in creating durable customer relationship, the digital focus should stand in optimizing specific pages to attract the desired target group. Furthermore, the exploratory research conducted makes it even more clear for the company which are the target groups the website should be optimized for. Similarly, as social media has become indispensable for every business, a more active presence of Be Event Group on social media platforms is also necessary. Moreover, a big opportunity of Be Event Group stands in their office location in the Rotterdam-The Hague Airport. This venue represents a significant opportunity of creating a physical network as many corporations rent conference rooms in the hotel for their meetings. Therefore, this venue represents a chance to increase brand awareness and address to a new target group that might be interested in combining their meetings with an event.

In order to understand how the company could retain their customers, external desk research has been combined with observations. To summarize the findings, it can be noticed that the first impression does always matter, while the current stable customers have chosen to return organizing events with Be Event Group due to the structured and professional way the company is taking care of the event from A to Z. Moreover, it is important that these customers can receive a personalized and compelling experience. While there are specific events that are unique and hard to be imitated, therefore highly valued by potential stable customers, it can be concluded that these events should be tailored to specific customer needs for an efficient long-term collaboration. To sum up, it is important to be able to offer the customers a full experience, taking care of every small detail, starting from the planning and content of the game to the contact and commitment towards sustaining a relationship with the customer.

In conclusion, there are several ways in which Be Event Group may attract and retain stable customers. First of all, due to the dynamic industry the company is operating in, a thorough definition and distinction between the target groups to be reached was required. Following this part, and according to the information received from the external interviews, it has been concluded which are the potential stable customers. To reach these target groups, the company should focus both on the digital part including the company's website and their social media activity, but also on their physical capabilities, as the company's office is located in a place where several big corporations hold weekly conferences. In terms of retention, together with the vast sales experience of the management, the interviews and observations have considerably contributed towards underlining the most important capabilities and traits that Be Event Group should focus on, such as reliability, professionalism, out of the box thinking and good communication with the customer.

Considering the fact that a totally new problem for the company has been researched upon, further research might examine how the current findings might correspond to the actual typology of a stable customer in the events industry. Furthermore, while this problem has been studied for a particular case, that of Be Event Group, further research might help generalize the findings of this report and assess their applicability on the industry as a whole. Lastly, this report leaves room for expansion, as due to how specifically the research was orientated towards addressing this problem for Be Event Group. Therefore, new findings might contribute towards additional results that will better shape and define this target group, consequently improving the ways of reaching and retaining them.

5. Recommendations

The findings of this research along with the conclusions that have been drawn, led to a series of recommendations. These recommendations might help the company become successful towards increasing their brand awareness, while attracting and retaining the new desired target group.

Create an SEO Plan to address and retain the new target group.

The best way for the company to increase their digital traffic and to address also to the new potential returning customers identified, is to optimize their digital content in an attempt to increase their performance in organic search. The proposed strategy is to create a “blog section” in which the company can focus on using specific keywords that have a bigger potential of addressing to the new target group. In the starting phase, there is no associated cost with this solution as the company can use the website current “news section” to implement these blog posts. These posts will be published on the company’s website once in 2 weeks, while every post will have a different theme. The performance of every post will be tracked on a monthly basis, while the main indicator of success will be the click-through rate for those specific pages. Furthermore, in order to maximize the chances of returning customers, an additional page on the company’s website can be created that will emphasize on the reasons why companies should choose Be Event Group as their long-term event partner, as resulted from the research. Ultimately, every blog post will refer back to this page.

Increase awareness on social media

Social media is part of the core of any digital strategy. While the company’s website is crucial, being active on social media platforms is equally important. During Covid, social media activity was mainly neglected by the company, but it is particularly important now during the restructuring phase the company is experiencing. Unlike the SEO plan for the company’s website, the posts on social media should take place more regularly, on a weekly basis, and must focus on conveying feelings and experiences for the company’s customers. Having discovered what are the preferred events that should be addressed to the new target group, these events should also be visually accessible to the potential customers on social media, by showing photos and videos from these particular events. As a complement to the SEO Plan proposed, the company might consider synchronizing their website blog posts with their Twitter account which is a social media platform more adequate for this type of content.

Consider account management on long-term

As resulted from the research justification, the target group that Be Event Group is trying to achieve can be divided into several distinct customer categories. Therefore, account management might be the key for the company in order to nurture their client relationship. In order to grow these opportunities an increase the potential of return, a key account plan represents a long-term solution for Be Event Group to successfully retain preferred customers. Using a key account plan, the company can focus on defining the needs and setting up the objectives and solution for every customer type identified. Furthermore, the company can establish an action plan tailored for every category in order to maximize the retention. Consequently, the key account plan will represent a guideline for the company in growing the chances of a returning customer.

Cross-selling opportunities with Fletcher Hotels' customers

The venue where the main office of the company is located represents a big opportunity for Be Event Group to attract returning customers. As the office is located at the first floor of Fletcher Hotels in the Rotterdam-The Hague Airport, this floor has a lot of meetings and conference rooms that are being rented by corporations. Therefore, the company could seize this opportunity and offer special deals and packages to these corporations, by combining their initial meeting with a team-building event. These deals could bring mutual benefits to Be Event Group and Fletcher Hotels as they would be able to cross-sell and up-sell their services to a shared customer base.

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Appendix A – Research Design Table

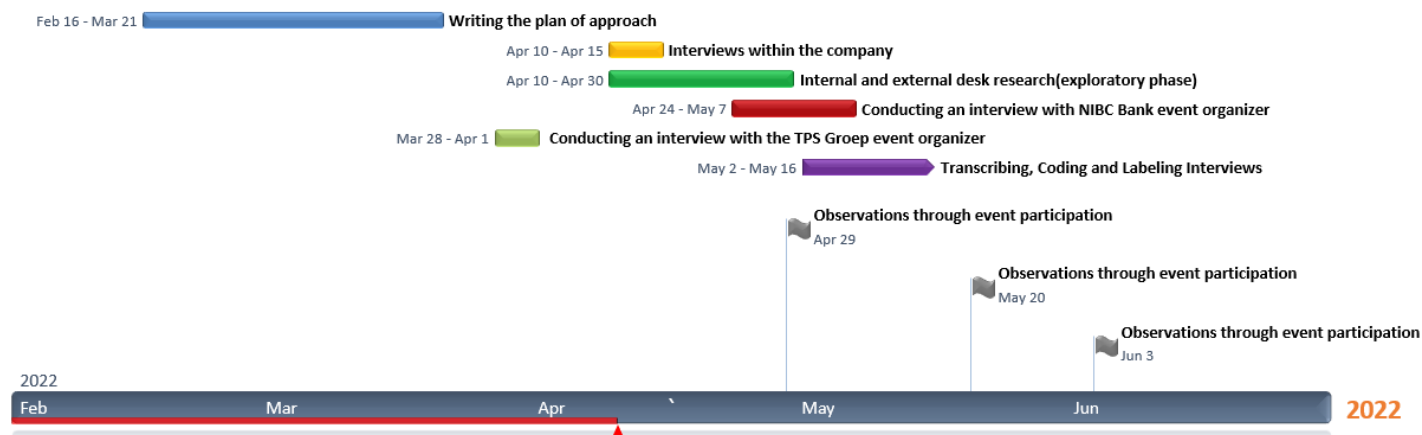
Table 1 – Research design for every sub-question

Sub-question	Desk research		Qualitative Research	
	Internal	External	Interviews	Observations
Exploratory research				
1. What is the exact profile of this target group that BeEvent group is trying to attract and retain?		✓	✓	
2. How does the desired customer base differ from the current one?	✓		✓	
3. How should the new customer base look like in order to fulfill the company's expectations in terms of stability and profitability?	✓			
4. What are these companies' criteria when choosing a business partner for organizing corporate events?			✓	
5. What type of events or activities does the new target group prefers?			✓	
Applied research				
6. How can Be Event Group create a network in which this type of customers can be reached?			✓	
7. How can digital marketing techniques contribute towards reaching this target audience?	✓	✓		
8. Once a potential loyal customer organizes an event with BeEvent Group, how can retention be maximized?			✓	✓

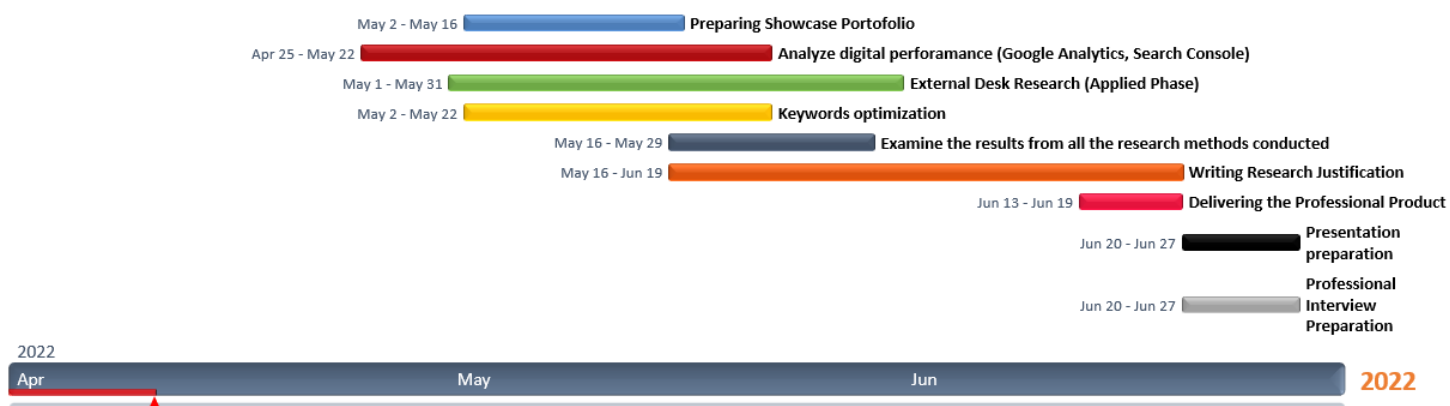
Appendix B – Planning

Figure 1 – Activities planned during graduation phase

1st part planning



2nd part planning



Appendix C – Interviews' protocol

Interviews 1 and 2

With the purpose of answering the first two sub-questions as part of the exploratory research, two interviews will be held with the two managing directors Mr. Arthur Bol and Mr. Martijn Wessels. These interviews have as a purpose to define the expectations and needs of the management regarding the new target group to be achieved. In order to assure a structural way of getting data, but also give space to the interviewee for important insights. The interviews' structure will be a combination between semi-structured and unstructured/in-depth interviews. A list of questions and themes will be preliminary established, however, during the interview the order of the question may vary and probing questions will occur, depending on the flow of the conversation. Moreover, the interviewee will have the opportunity to talk freely about his beliefs in connection to the subject, therefore, facilitating in-depth answers which are needed in the exploratory phase. Both interviews will be recorded and transcribed into textual form afterward. The next step consists in coding the qualitative data gathered from the interviews so it can be further analyzed and compared to the findings from desk research and with the data from the other interviews.

Date of the interviews: 15th April 2022

Interviewees: Mr. Arthur Bol and Mr. Martijn Wessels (managing directors of Be Event Group)

Starting time: 11:00 for the first interview/ 12:00 for the second interview

Location: Be Event Group office – Rotterdam-The Hague Airport, Fletcher Hotels

Main topics/ subjects of interest:

The following themes were selected to be covered in the first 2 interviews with the management team of Be Event Group. Having these themes covered during these interviews, relevant data will be collected that will contribute answering sub-questions 1,2 and 3. Therefore, the data collected will fill the information gaps 2 and 3 while also contributing in answering the information gap 1.

1. Expectations about stability and profitability for the customer base
2. Perception about the new customer base
3. Most potentially appealing events to the desired target group
4. Details about the current customers that fit in this pattern the company is looking for

Before the interview:

- Explain the purpose of the interview
- Confidentiality matters stated and permission to record
- The topics that will be discussed are briefly stated
- Confirmation about the time available for the interview (interviews expected to last around 30-40 minutes)

During the interview:

- Due to the nature of the interview (in-depth information needed to help in the exploratory research, listening carefully and building understanding is essential)
- Test understanding by summarizing explanations provided by the interviewees
- Be aware of the biases that might occur (cultural differences, projecting personal opinions, wrong interpretations, etc.)
- Think about potential probing questions

Interview questions

Topic 1 - Expectations about stability and profitability for the customer base

- I. Considering the fast pace of this environment, how would you describe a stable customer in this industry?
Potential clarification: How many events do they need to organize in a month/year? And with how many participants?
- II. Why do you think is it that rare that a customer comes back for an event?
- III. Does the company currently doing any effort to retain its customers? Is there usually any type of after-event interaction?
- IV. From a financial point of view, what is the biggest problem that occurs because of an unstable customer base?

Topic 2 - Perception about the new customer base

- I. How do you currently perceive this new target group that the company is aiming for?
Potential clarification: What kind of companies? What industries, what activities?
- II. How would they be different from the current customer base?
- III. As I understand that this target group would be really valuable for a company such as Be Event Group, I wanted to ask how do you currently compare to the competition in the industry, as most likely every competitor would like this type of customers?

Topic 3 -Most potentially appealing events to the desired target group

- I. As you have an idea already about what the company is looking for, which events would you say fit this target group the best?
- II. Why? Can you tell me more about these events?

Topic 4 - Details about the current customers that fit in this pattern the company is looking for

I know already that Be Event Group considers TPS Groep and NIBC, two of the company's current customers as being the perfect example of what the company is looking for. Therefore, I want to talk about these two companies and the relationship Be Event Group has with them.

- I. How did you first meet/reached these companies?
- II. Can you tell me more about what these companies are doing?
- III. How frequently do they organize events with Be Event? Is this frequency agreed upon on a yearly basis?
- IV. What events are they doing? Is it always the same event?

Interviews 3 and 4

With the purpose of answering the fourth and the fifth questions as part of the exploratory research, two interviews will be held with the organizing managers from TPS Groep and NIBC Bank, the only 2 companies that are currently part of the Be Event's customer base and can be referred to as stable customers. These interviews have as a purpose to determine what these companies' expectations are for their event partner and the type of events that they organize. Furthermore, these interviews will also help understanding what kind of companies have the potential of becoming stable customers for Be Event. Understanding these companies' philosophy will contribute to assure a structural way of getting data, but also give space to the interviewee for important insights. The interviews' structure will be a combination between semi-structured and unstructured/in-depth interviews. A list of questions and themes will be preliminary established, however, during the interview the order of the question may vary and probing questions will occur, depending on the flow of the conversation. Moreover, the interviewee will have the opportunity to talk freely about his beliefs in connection to the subject, therefore, facilitating in-depth answers which are needed in the exploratory phase. Both interviews will be recorded and transcribed into textual form afterward. The next step consists in coding the qualitative data gathered from the interviews so it can be further analyzed and compared to the findings from desk research and with the data from the other interviews.

Interview TPS Groep

Date of the interviews: 2nd May 2022

Interviewees: Mrs. Jasmijn Klapwijk, Organizing manager TPS Groep

Starting time: 09:00

Location: Online via Zoom

Interview NIBC Bank

Date of the interviews: 9th May 2022

Interviewees: Mr. George Suers, Organizing committee member NIBC Bank

Starting time: 10:00

Location: Strandpaviljoen BoonooNooNoos, The Hague

Main topics/subjects of interest

The following themes were selected to be covered in these 2 interviews with the organizing manager from TPS and NIBC. Having these themes covered during these interviews, relevant data will be collected that will answer sub-questions 4 and 5. Therefore, the data collected will fill the information gaps 4 and 5.

1. Information about the company (size, industry, activities)
2. Criteria when choosing an event company
3. Events preferred (type of event, duration, type of activity, location, time)

Before the interview:

- Purpose of the interview explained
- Confidentiality matters stated and permission to record
- The topics that will be discussed are briefly stated
- Confirmation about the time available for the interview (interviews expected to last around 30 minutes)

During the interview:

- Due to the nature of the interview (in-depth information needed to help in the exploratory research, listening carefully and building understanding is essential)
- Test understanding by summarizing explanations provided by the interviewees
- Awareness of the biases that might occur (cultural differences, projecting personal opinions, wrong interpretations, etc.)
- Thinking about potential probing questions

Interview Questions

Topic 1 - Information about the company (size, industry, activities)

- I. Can you tell me more about your position and roles in the company?
- II. Can you tell me more about TPS/NIBC?

Potential follow ups:

“What are the main activities of the company?”

“In which industry does the company operates?”

“What is the size of the company? How many employees does it have?”

“Is there one single person in the company that is organizing team-buildings/corporate outings?”

Topic 2 - Criteria when choosing an event company

- I. How did you meet/reached Be Event Group?
- II. What were you looking for when you first meet Be Event Group?
- III. What are the main factors you are looking for in a company when you organize an event?
- IV. How often do you organize an event and why do you think this frequency is an adequate one?
- V. What did you like/dislike so far in the collaboration with Be Event Group?

Topic 3 - Events preferred (type of event, duration, type of activity, location, time)

- I. What kind of experience do you wish to offer to the employees when you organize an event/ a team-building activity? What is the purpose behind this?
- II. How does the current events you organize with Be Event Group compare to the initial idea you had when you have started doing this?
- III. What is for you a good time for organizing this type of events and how much these events should last? Why?
- IV. What do you like/dislike about the current events you organize?
- V. What else you would like to offer to your employees in terms of the event content?

Appendix D: Protocol observations

Using this research method of gaining qualitative data, the main goal is to understand what drives the already stable customers to organize repetitive events with Be Event Group, but most importantly what are the main points of interest for the organizer of these outings during the unfolding of the event. For the purpose of collecting relevant data, the observations will be gathered from the role of complete participant, as the student will be present at the events organized by TPS Groep (one of the already stable customers of the company) in order to instruct the event. These observations will be conducted on three different occasions on the 29th of April, 20th of May and the 3rd of June, which are the next three dates when TPS Groep is organizing events with Be Event Group. The way of collecting data through observations is by having a checklist prepared in which the behaviour of the organizing manager will be noted and monitored following specific guidelines. Furthermore, on top of the primary observations, experiential data will also be gathered by taking note of the perceptions and feelings while the process is being experienced. This whole set-up will be possible as the student playing the role of the event's instructor will be staying at the TPS office for the whole duration of the event, while the participants are out in the city conducting the event using the iPad received in the beginning. Therefore, the student's presence there for a duration of approximately two hours will facilitate the observations of the manager's behaviour.

After the observations will be gathered in three different instances, with potential of three different organizing managers, the conclusions will be drawn. Given the fact that the subject(s) will not be aware of the fact that he/she/they will be observed, total confidentiality concerning the name of the persons observed will be kept for both the final conclusion and the final results, while the data achieved through these observations will be used only to generalize how Be Event Group can increase the retention among their stable customers and what the potential stable customers are looking for in their team-buildings/corporate outings events' partner.

The data gathered will be combined and compared to the findings from the other research methods.

Date of the observations: 29th of April, 20th of May, 3rd of June

Person observed: Organizing manager of TPS Groep

Duration of the observations: 15:00-18:00

Location: TPS Groep Office - House Wilhelminakade 304, Rotterdam

Main topics/ subjects of interest

In order to contribute towards answering the 8th sub-questions therefore filling the 7th information gaps, these observations will aim to discover the following aspects.

1. How much is the organizing manager involved in the conduct of the event
2. How much does he/she cares about the participants' satisfaction
3. How much does he/she cares about the content of the event
4. What (if any) else is he/she expecting to see?

Checklist

1. How many times did the organizer engaged in a conversation with the instructor? For what reason?
2. How many times did the organizer interacted with the participants during the opening or closing of the event?
3. Did the organizer ask anything about the content of the event? What?
4. Were there any concerns related to the unfolding of the events? What concerns?
5. Has the organizer expressed any of his expectations? If yes, what expectations?
6. Was there additional interaction between the organizer and the instructor related to a different topic than the above mentioned? What was the interaction about?
7. Remarks about the organizer's attitude/behaviour (as perceived by the student)

Appendix E – Transcripts of interviews

Interview 1

Date: 15th April 2022

Time: 14:40

Location: Wings Hotel, Rotterdam- The Hague Airport

Interviewee: Mr. Arthur Bol, Be Event Group Managing Director

Coding legend

Stability (sub-question 2,3)

Profitability (sub-question 2,3)

Current Retention (sub -question 3)

Perception about the new target group (Sub-question 1)

Competitive advantage (sub-question 4)

Preferred events (sub-question 5)

Details TPS Groep (sub-question 4,5)

Details NIBC Bank(sub questions 4,5)

Interviewer: The date of today is 15th of April 2022, the time is 14:40, and the interview is taking place at the Wings Hotel in the Rotterdam- The Hague Airport. I have in front of me Mr. Arthur Bol, the managing director of Be Event Group. Good afternoon!

Mr. Bol: Good afternoon!

Interviewer: Let me start by giving you an overview of the purpose of the interview and the main topics that will be discussed. The purpose of the interview is to define from a management perspective the expectations and the needs of the company regarding the new target group to be achieved. I will start by asking you about the stability and profitability of this customer base, how do you currently perceive this new customer base, what are the most potentially appealing events to the desired target group, and more details about the customers that the company has and are already part of this pattern that the company is looking for. I want to start with the first question which is: Considering the fast pace of this environment, how would you describe a stable customer in this industry regarding the events they organize and participants they bring

Mr. Bol: Pretty difficult question to begin with... defining a stable customer in this environment. If you look from a perspective of how many events they organize, let me explain first what the general thing is that they do when organizing an event. First of all, they do it occasionally, but generally 2 times a year, 2 to 4 times. Moreover, it is usually on a department level, there is one department that organizes it. They have to organize a team-building outing let's say... every once in half a year. But the difficult thing is that they always have different people organizing the event.

Sometimes it is the secretary, but very often is changing. So, that is the customers that we have at the moment. From this perspective, it is difficult to imagine a stable customer. If we would have a vision of stable customers, then that will be customers in this branch that have the same organizer responsible for organizing again and again.

Interviewer: Ok, so that would be ideal, that the companies are keeping only one organizer, so he knows how to come back to Be Event. If we think that a stable customer group will contribute to a big part of the Be Event customer base, how many total events do you expect them to organize and how many participants?

Mr. Bol: Ideally, it would be nice to have them 3 times a year, as this is the maximum number of times they will organize, but there are also other aspects in this branch. They want to organize team-building events, not only for the leisure outings but on a specialized basis.

Interviewer: Does the company currently doing any effort to retain its customers? Is there usually any type of after-event interaction?

Mr. Bol: Normally, with one-time customers, as big part of our customer base right now, it is a lot of effort we have to do without any return.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Bol: So, that is why we decided not to do it anymore, because you can have a lot of feedback, but that is no guarantee that they will return.

Interviewer: Exactly!

Mr. Bol: One way or another, there will be another organizer and they will do their research all over again

Interviewer: I see... From a financial point of view, what is the biggest problem that occurs because of an unstable customer base, so how do your finances suffer?

Mr. Bol: When there are crisis periods or economical setbacks, then the first thing that people cut off are leisure events, and team-building events, unless it has another purpose. If it has an educational purpose or it is one of the rewards they do, they will not eliminate this kind of events that fast. But if it for pure leisure, as we offer now, then that is the first cut they will do in any economic situation.

Interviewer: I see... that is really interesting. The next question I want to ask you is about the current perception you have about the new target group. How do you currently perceive this target group? What are the companies that Be Event might approach?

Mr. Bol: We just experienced companies that are now regular repeaters and those are companies that do trainings for new employees or trainings for external purposes and they would like to reward their students with a team-building activity or might be interesting to see if the whole team building is part of the training. That is also a possibility. But then we have to find out.

Interviewer: Yes. As I understand this target group would be really valuable for a company such as Be Event Group and I wanted to ask how do you compare with the competition in the industry as most likely every competitor would like this type of customers?

Mr. Bol: It depends on how many companies are thinking about this possibility. I have no idea.

Interviewer: So what are you saying is that it is an opportunity.

Mr. Bol: Yes, especially because most of the companies want to act about what is happening now in the current market of events and temporary team-building events.

Interviewer: As you see so far, the competitors are not seizing this opportunity, but rather focus on the current situation of the market?

Mr. Bol: Yes.

Interviewer: The next topic I want to talk about is the events that you think might appeal to this target group. As you have an idea already about what the company is looking for, which events from your product offering would best fit this target group?

Mr. Bol: Well it is a combination of meetings and then immediately something as a reward, so it can be a meeting venue where they have their courses or their meetings and then in between they would have a team-building event. So it would probably be something combined with a meeting

Interviewer: Can you give me some specific examples from the events that you already organize that can be combined with a meeting for this type of customers?

Mr. Bol: When the venue we are now at, we have a lot of customers and some of them are also repetitive customers as return to the same hotel, and we want to be the preferred provider for their events, of course by collaborating with the hotel. Another example is with TPS which have their own training area and we organize and come up with something customized for them. Ideally for us, there are the iPad team building events with which we can do a leisure program but also insert educational challenges in the game, so the modern world is gamification at this moment so we can use a learning factor in what we offer. We can combine questions in a way that offers purpose to their training

Interviewer: I see... We were talking about repetitive customers and you already mentioned TPS Groep. That is the next topic I want to talk about. You have told me before about TPS and I also know about the NIBC Bank which are two of the customers that represent a good example of what the company is looking for. Therefore, I wanted to ask you more about these companies and the relationship Be Event has with them. The first question is... how these companies reached Be Event Group?

Mr. Bol: The oldest company is NIBC. They actually have a company outing 2 times a year, summer and winter. In winter time, they only have dinners and in summer they have a leisure program outside. The purpose is that it must be a sport event, preferably on the beach. We have done 2 times the beach event with this company meaning 200+ people. They have an organizing committee with the same people in this committee. They had a nice experience with us with the beach events and then they got out and tried another company. They were not satisfied so they came back and we didn't disappoint them. That is one of the important things... we should give them quality and then they will stay.

Interviewer: I already know from Mr. Wessels that with TPS, the way you first reached them was that they found your website and they liked it that much that they contacted you. Do you remember the first interaction with NIBC?

Mr. Bol: Also, from the website.

Interviewer: The last question I want to ask you is... what kind of agreements does Be Event currently has with these two companies? Is it a package that you agree upon in the beginning of the year?

Mr. Bol: With NIBC, it is not a fixed contract, it is only customer trust, we did with them also the UitjesBox (a game in which the customer receives a box with several games that can be played without an instructor) so we can also contact them and say “ we have something new, are you interested?”. With TPS it was not a written contract but we had an agreement with them to customize this game. It might be considered as a contract. Harbour Dropping (the Ipad game that TPS is organizing every time for their employees) is for minimum 15 people, but we organize it for them for 10 people. What we said was” If you do it every week, or many times a year, then we can consider to do that” and then the agreement was that we will organize it for 10 people, but they will do it on regular basis every time they have a training which is now ever 2 or 3 weeks. Now they have already booked for the whole year.

Interviewer: Alright. That was really valuable information. Thank you very much for being part of this interview. I really help me a lot for my exploratory research.

Mr. Bol: Ok. Good. Good luck!

Interviewer: Thank you!

Interview 2

Date: 15th April 2022

Time: 14:40

Location: Wings Hotel, Rotterdam- The Hague Airport

Interviewee: Mr. Martijn Wessels, Be Event Group Managing Director

Coding legend

Stability (sub-question 2,3)

Profitability (sub-question 2,3)

Current Retention (sub -question 3)

Perception about the new target group (Sub-question 1)

Competitive advantage (sub-question 4)

Preferred events (sub-question 5)

Details TPS Groep (sub-question 4,5)

Details NIBC Bank(sub questions 4,5)

Interviewer: The date of today is 15th of April 2022, the time is 12:51, and the interview is taking place at the Wings Hotel in the Rotterdam- The Hague Airport. I have in front of me Mr. Martijn Wessels, one of the managing directors of Be Event Group. Good afternoon!

Mr. Wessels: Good afternoon, Bogdan!

Interviewer: Let me start by giving you an overview of the purpose of the interview and the main topics that will be discussed. The purpose of the interview is to define from a management perspective the expectations and the needs of the company regarding the new target group to be achieved. I will start by asking you about the stability and profitability of this customer base, how do you currently perceive this new customer base, what are the most potentially appealing events to the desired target group, and more details about the customers that the company has and are already part of this pattern that the company is looking for. I want to start with the first question which is: Considering the fast pace of this environment, how would you describe a stable customer in this industry regarding the events they organize and participants they bring?

Mr. Wessels: A stable customer in this industry will be a customer that will come once or twice a year because an outing for a company only take place once a year usually. So if they come back at least once, I can say that they come back on a regular base

Interviewer: Is it also a minimum number of participants that would be satisfactory for the company you have from these companies?

Mr Wessels: If it is once a year, should be at least 40-50 persons. Anything below that is too small to consider them a returning customer.

Interviewer: Ok... Let's say in a perfect scenario where the company would have their customer base only stable customers, how many of these types of companies will be sufficient for Be Event to not need other customers?

Mr. Wessels: So if we don't take "normal customers" anymore?

Interviewer: Yes, let's imagine a perfect scenario.

Mr. Wessels: In a perfect scenario, if we have 2 companies a week, that would be more than enough.

Interviewer: The next question I want to ask is... why do you think it is rare that a customer comes back for an event? Why do you think they don't usually come back?

Mr. Wessels: I think there are two reasons. First reason is that every year another person is going to organize the company outing and because of that they want to do new, special things. They want to be unique so they will change scenery, they will change cities and they will change activities. Number 2 reason can be, which is also a thing that we believe to be hard to get a grip on... if we have a group of 15 people, then only the person that organizes the outing will know the company's name and the others don't. So next year if anyone else organizes the event, they don't know what the company was so they don't have a bond with the company. They say "Oh it was a really nice outing", but they don't know who it was, what the company was about etc.

Interviewer: Ok... that is an interesting perspective. The next thing is... Does the company do any effort to retain its customer? Is there usually any type of after event interaction?

Mr. Wessels: No, nothing. Because we don't have the time...I mean we don't find the time to do it because we think other things are more important... They are probably not, but that is why we need you help as well. Second of all, if you have the information of an after sale, then you have to keep that information and use it with a commercial purpose. We have done it, as other companies do ask you about satisfaction and rating from 1 to 10, you probably see it in your private life as well as soon as you buy something. Most of the people don't want to fill in that because they are being spammed a lot. Our thing is to have a nice time only.

Interviewer: So, it didn't work in your case...

Mr. Wessels: No,no,no

Interviewer: From a financial point of view, what is the biggest problem that occurs because of an unstable customer base? How your finances are affected?

Mr. Wessels: As soon as you have more staff, you need the events to come in to get your right balance. Because of Corona we lost a lot of staff and we didn't get back on our full staff member and we are not sure if we want to be like it was. That is why we need to know the potential of stable customers. So it affects us in two ways. Once you start building a customer base with returning customers, you also need to make sure that if customers drop out when you are already used to that income, it can be a risk. For example, if a big company like MediaMarkt organizes an event with us and we build only around them, if they decide to do something else, then you have to start again from scratch. So building on the stable customers is also a risk. I think it should be a balance between repetitive customers and customers that come only once. It should be a mix.

Interviewer: That was really helpful, I want to go to the second topic, which is your perception. How do you currently perceive this new target group? What kind of companies, industries activities?

Mr. Wessels: At the moment? Or what we want to attract?

Interviewer: What you wish to attract.

Mr. Wessels: I think it should be companies that have training groups, so they train people to work for an organization and they want to reward them, so it is a continuous process through the year. What I also think is that there are governments working with small teams and they need to see each other now and then, because a lot of government employees are working from home and they don't meet that frequently anymore, especially when the team is getting bigger. I think it is good for them to meet every 4 or 6 months to do something together. So training companies, governments and I also think.... But that is a little bit tricky... schools. Although schools have a lower budget, but the amounts of people are quite big. I have seen it this year, with the high school in Rotterdam. Last year we had 350 students divided in two days organizing an event with us, sand sculpting. It went that good that I see they are now coming back with even more participants, 800 this year. So if I can keep the money in a healthy order per person, it might be a thing that comes back every year.

Interviewer: I see...Also as I understand, this target group would be really valuable for a company such as Be Event Group, I want to ask how do you currently compare with the competition, as probably every competitor would like this type of customer that organizes repetitive events,

Mr. Wessels: In our business, you see that our competitors really work with a low price per participant. We stepped out of that market because we said "we want that price to organize an event so this is what we are going to ask for", so we are going to set us apart from organizations

that are competing on price and address to low budget customers. In the cities, there are a lot of companies that are not targeting on that kind of groups; however, we are not totally aware of the power of our competitors and their interests. On the beach you could see a lot of small businesses that ask for a very low price...

Interviewer: And you want to address to a high-end customer?

Mr. Wessels: Yes. Also, I don't think there are a lot of companies like this.

Interviewer: Now I want to move to the next topic, which is about the events that might be the most appealing to this target group, so which events would you recommend for this type of customers?

Mr. Wessels: I think we have to divide them in 3 groups. On the beach there is the Robinson game.

Interviewer: Robinson... Can you tell me more about it?

Mr. Wessels: It is a team building game and it is played with a group of people that has to work together, so there are four games. In one of them you work with bamboo to build something. In the second you need to be clever to match some plates (a memory game). In another one you need to make a construction from bamboo and there is another funny game in which you are searching for coconuts. There are groups of 6 or seven that are competing with each other but helping each other as well. That would be nice on the beach. Moreover, we have an Ipad game on the beach called Dune Dropping in which you compete with others and walk through the dunes. You solve challenges, answer questions... it is funny. In the city you can also an adrenaline factor with RIB Boats or Water Taxi. For example, we have the Harbour Dropping game in which you are making groups of 7 people and they need to go out from one point to another to solve a mystery or answer different questions using their Ipad. When they come back, we also have a prize winning contest. Another one I am thinking about, which is one based on our office in the hotel Wings in the Rotterdam-The Hague Airport. This hotel has also a plane hangar where we created a game called Air Crash Investigation. This is also a team building event, in which you have to solve a mystery about a missing plane and we can sell that to the government as I have told you before. I think these are probably the main events.

Interviewer: The last topic of our interview.... I want to ask you more about the customers that are already part of the customer base of the company and are already fitting in this pattern. I already know that Be Event Group considers TPS Group and NIBC Bank two of the companies as being the perfect example of what Be Event is looking for so I want to start by asking how did you first reached these companies?

Mr Wessels: NIBC Bank reached Arthur, my colleague. We organized something of them on the beach. They wanted a sport activity on the beach, team building related. They were all very competitive so we decided to make a sport day on the beach where they could play volleyball, soccer etc. What we did is that we gave it a theme and we named the games like Copa Cabana Volley, Brazilian Coconut Soccer so we dressed the whole event and they really loved it.... It is funny that you ask because after two years they decided to organize it with another company. It wasn't as good as they expected to be so an year after they came back and now we are already doing it for 5-6 years. This is a company that comes once a year, but with a big group like 200-300 people. So, we love to have them back every year so we can already count on it, therefore we keep the date free for them as we know they always come back. The other one is TPS. They

asked for a game, Harbour Dropping (interactive Ipad game) to be organized with less people that we are asking for it. We are requiring at least 20 participants for this. They said they have only 8-10 people. We engaged in a conversation and we realized that they are willing to organize this event frequently, so we decided to see what we can do. Therefore, we adjusted the game switching from the initial idea of offering rides with the RIB Boat to offering rides with the water taxi as part of the game. We then created the game for 8-10 people. But because they booked it not once but 8 times a year, it was profitable for us.

Interviewer: So, did you make them a package deal for the whole year?

Mr. Wessels: Yes.

Interviewer: And it is the same with NIBC?

Mr. Wessels: No. They pay per participant.

Interviewer: What else I want to ask you is how TPS and NIBC first reached you meaning via website or phone number, or heard about you from someone?

Mr. Wessels: During Corona time Arthur and I created a completely new website, and this website was different than before and different from our competitors. We used a lot of colors and different themes to differentiate ourselves. And TPS fell for that. They were impressed about it. NIBC Bank was before my time here and they came also because they were looking for something to organize with a big group. Because of some keywords that were used in our website, they managed to find us.

Interviewer: So one last thing... TPS is doing 8 times a year the harbour dropping game but what about NIBC, do they always do the same event? Or is it potential of doing something else with this company?

Mr. Wessels: I think the potential is there... to do something in the winter. However, there is a big company that is currently organizing this big summer event, always in June. 4 out of the 5 times there was a really bad weather but they still continued playing because they were so competitive. So it is hard to find in the winter a really competitive thing. It can be, but there are not many locations in the winter that can host 300 people for a competitive activity apart from the beach.

Interviewer: Well, that was my interview for today. Thank you very much for valuable information.

Mr. Wessels: You are welcome!

Interviewer: It was really interesting and very helpful for my research.

Mr. Wessels: Alright!

Interviewer: Thank you!

Interview 3

Date: 2nd May 2022

Time: 9:00

Location: Online via Zoom

Interviewee: Mrs. Jasmijn Klapwijk, project manager at TPS Groep

Coding legend

Relevant information about TPS (Sub-question 1)

Purpose of the events organized (Sub-Question 1)

Criteria when choosing an event partner (Sub-Question 4)

Reasons for cooperating with Be Event Group (Sub-Question 4)

Preferred events (Sub- Question 5)

Points of improvement (Sub-Question 5)

Frequency of events (Sub-Question 2)

Interviewer: The time is now 9:00 and I am conducting an interview with the organizing manager from TPS Groep, Mrs. Jasmijn Klapwijk. Good morning!

Mrs. Klapwijk: Good morning!

Interviewer: First question I want to address you is if you can tell me mor about your position and roles in the company?

Mrs. Klapwijk: I am a project manager at TPS and this means that you do a lot of stuff, but your main focus point is to train people. We call them trainees and what we do is we have conversations with people that areit is like coaching, coaching people, bring them further in their work. That is the main focus. We also do other things like training programs and each project manager is different.

Interviewer: So, each project manager has his/her own groups that he/she is working with?

Mrs. Klapwijk: Yes, because we are a small company everything is possible. If you like to have trainings that is okay, but if you like to do more sales stuff, that is also ok.

Interviewer: So, what would you say is the size of the company in terms of employees?

Mrs. Klapwijk: At the office, we are 40-45 people and the people that we send out to the other companies, how do you say that in English?

Interviewer: Outsourcing

Mrs. Klapwijk: Yes exactly, the people that we outsource are like 250. Sometimes 300, sometimes 200.

Interviewer: As far as I know these trainees have a training program for 2-3 weeks, but are there also training programs longer?

Mrs. Klapwijk: They follow workshops, the program is 2 years. They start with 2 weeks training and then in between they follow workshops, but that is not a week, that is just one evening or one day depending on which traineeships they are. We have different programs, I am responsible for the health program, but we also have other traineeships like banking and insurances.

Interviewer: Ok. I see. Another question about the company... is there one single person in the company that organizes the outings or how does the organizing process take place?

Mrs. Klapwijk: There is not one person, but you know Esther (another contact person from TPS for the company), I think she does the most for these things, but more organizational wise. For each traineeship there are the project managers responsible for it.

Interviewer: The next topic I want to address is the criteria when choosing an event partner, so I want to ask you if you know how did you meet/reached Be Event Group firstly?

Mrs. Klapwijk: I think Esther was searching on Google and then she saw Be Event. What you see is that we mostly have relationships with smaller companies because they are working with us, think with us and that is one of the criteria.

Interviewer: So that was one of the things you were looking for?

Mrs. Klapwijk: Yes, people who think with us, create something with us, not for us, but with us

Interviewer: And other than that, what would you say were the other things you were interested in before finding Be Event Group? What did you wish for your trainees?

Mrs. Klapwijk: We just wanted a nice program for the introduction days and we were searching for something in the program that was special and fun, mostly fun. But also, something that will get people together, so they form groups, so that was the main reason to search for something fun.

Interviewer: How often do you organize an event, and why do you think that frequency is an appropriate one?

Mrs. Klapwijk: It depends on the incoming of the trainees. It depends on how much people we recruit, we have an expectation for every year, but these expectations can be higher and lower than what actually happens. But always in small groups.

Interviewer: So, this event is a standard reward that you give your trainees at the end of the training session?

Mrs. Klapwijk: It is like you are creating a group, with whom you will work for the following two years in every workshop. So, the people in that group see each other a lot.

Interviewer: So, this event takes place in the beginning of those two years?

Mrs. Klapwijk: Yes, in the beginning, after they have their traineeship.

Interviewer: There is one last question about this topic I want to ask you. I want to know if you can tell me some things you like and some things you dislike about the event and the collaboration with Be Event Group?

Mrs. Klapwijk: The contact is good. They think with us, so that is why we are with Be Event. The people that do this event are happy. And what I don't like... Until now I can't find anything.

Interviewer: The third topic is the type of events that you would prefer and the first question was what kind of experience do you wish to offer to the employees when you organize an event. You already told me that it should be something fun. But do you have anything else in mind when you think about offering this experience? What is the purpose behind this?

Mrs. Klapwijk: It is to create a group, find the feeling of being an employee of TPS, create a bond between employees and the company and also explore the city. Because we are in Rotterdam.

Interviewer: So that was also one of the things you were looking for?

Mrs. Klapwijk: Yes.

Interviewer: I want to also ask you about the duration and timing of the event. What is for you a good time to organize this type of event and how much do you think is a good duration for this event and why?

Mrs. Klapwijk: We built it in a program already so for the moment is a good time. It is Friday 15:00 and this has a purpose. First, we meet each other and then we have a workshop where you learn a lot and then everybody is a bit tired so they need to have a fun thing. So in the end of the day is the perfect timing for us.

Interviewer: What about the duration? Would you say 2 hours is a good time for the feedback received from trainees?

Mrs. Klapwijk: I think it is ok, because if it is too long then everyone is tired.

Interviewer: The last thing I want to ask you is if there is anything you would like to add for your employees in terms of the content of the event?

Mrs. Klapwijk: To improve it?

Interviewer: To improve it or customize it. Something that would add more value for the participants.

Mrs. Klapwijk: That is a good question. Do you have any idea or suggestions?

Interviewer: In our case...we always find small things that we could improve from one event to another, that is why I was also curious to see from your perspective.

Mrs. Klapwijk: Yeah, maybe sometimes the instructions are not clear, because they receive a lot of information in a short time, but when they are on the water taxi it gets all clear. In the beginning they are like "What are we going to do?". So, I would say a bit more explanation in the beginning.

Interviewer: We saw that the confusion in the beginning varies from group to group. Some of them really make sure that they ask a lot of questions before they leave, but some just want to start faster.

Mrs. Klapwijk: I was also thinking, as an upgrade, if at the end, the pictures or movies (meaning photos and video assignments the complete during the iPad game in the city) are on a big screen so you can see it with each other.

Interviewer: We were thinking about ways to find a solution for this.

Mrs. Klapwijk: In the app is ok, but then you see people giggling with each other. Maybe that is something that we can do. For the rest, I like the towels (personalized towels offered by Be Event Group as prizes for the winners), they are terrible, but good. And for the rest, yes, we like the event.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time, this was a really helpful interview.

Mrs. Klapwijk: You are welcome!

Interview 4

Date: 9th May 2022

Time: 10:00

Location: Strandpaviljoen BooNooNooNoos, The Hague

Interviewee: Mr. George Suers, organizing committee member NIBC Bank

Coding legend

Relevant information about TPS (Sub-question 1)

Purpose of the events organized (Sub-Question 1)

Criteria when choosing an event partner (Sub-Question 4)

Reasons for cooperating with Be Event Group (Sub-Question 4)

Preferred events (Sub- Question 5)

Points of improvement (Sub-Question 5)

Frequency of events (Sub-Question 2)

Interviewer: I am recording from The Hague, I have in front of me Mr. Goerge Suers. Good morning!

Mr. Suers: Good morning!

Interviewer: The first question I want to address you is about the NIBC Bank and if you can tell me more about your position and roles in the company.

Mr. Suers: I have different positions within the bank. First, I work at the credit administration services, it is more an administrative job. We give credit to companies, usually mid-size, and I do the administration of those deals. Furthermore, I work for “My leisure” (organizing committee for events withing the bank) like sports days, we have the see run that we organize when everybody gets shirts. I work for the emergency team within the NIBC. Whenever there are fire brakes, I have to get everybody out... So, these are the things I do for my job now.

Interviewer: I see. Can you tell me more about NIBC?

Mr. Suers: It was founded after the second World War to help rebuild the Netherlands, but now is it more a private bank. So, what we do is, we have corporate side and a retail side, so if you want to mortgage you can now also join the bank and a couple of years ago that wasn't possible. We have 2 colors, blue and red, because for each side we have a different color.

Interviewer: About how many employees does the company have?

Mr. Suers: Around one thousand in different locations: Frankfurt, Germany; Bruxelles, Belgium; London UK and we used to have offices also in Curacao and Singapore, but yes around a thousand people.

Interviewer: Regarding the events you organize with Be Event, as far as I understood there is one committee that takes care of the event. Can you tell me more about it? How is this committee chosen and how often does it change?

Mr. Suers: We are with 7 people and you can join “My Leisure” when there is a vacancy and we always ask people who like to organize sports day or other events and we try to take people from all over the bank, but it is changing. Last year we lost four people and now we have four people. A new chairman, a new secretary. But for me I am in this committee since 2013 already organizing these events.

Interviewer: So, you know Be Event well I assume.

Mr. Suers: Normally I would do it with another chairman and I am now taking over his role for some things.

Interviewer: Therefore, going to the next topic, may I ask you how did you first meet or reached Be Event Group?

Mr. Suers: For me, we did already the events with Be Event. First, it was another name

Interviewer: Yes, it was Glope Events.

Mr. Suers: Glope Events yes, and now is Be Event. Last two years we didn’t do anything of course, due to Corona, and one year we did with a different company because we thought that one year it is good to change to see if other companies are better or worse. We tried that and it was total chaos.

Interviewer: What happened?

Mr. Suers: When you start to build something here let’s say the event start at 13:30, then I expect you to be here at around 8:00 to build everything, to be prepared. That day we came to the beach at around 12:00 and at 12:30 the organization came, and they had to put all the fields (referring to a beach day event) and we had to wait for them. Very sloppy, relation scheme was not that good. Therefore, we thought Be Event is the best for us. After this break this is the first year we organize a big beach event again and we asked ourselves again: are we going to change? But, no we decided to do it with Be Event.

Interviewer: If you remember how did you first find about the company?

Mr. Suers: Several years ago, they already knew Be Event, but I don’t know the exact way how the companies knew each other.

Interviewer: The next question is, what were you looking for when you first meet Be Event Group in terms of event partner?

Mr. Suers: We want to have a reliable partner, one that is thinking with you, because we always have a theme for our events, so we are trying to make out of the box things like: let’s build a net with holes. And they are always trying to think with us. And this is a big quality of Be Event Group.

Interviewer: The next question is how frequently you organize an event and why is this frequency appropriate?

Mr. Suers: For sport events it is once a year, because it is a big event when we also ask foreign offices to join. In the morning we have a business event, at the other beach club, but normally we have everything at the same location. Furthermore, we try to do every month an event, standard we have drinks at our bar in our office, but we do other things like soccer events, wine tasting, running, but also for Christmas we have a big area with food trucks and games and this is also one of the sport days and the Christmas celebration is one of the biggest.

Interviewer: So there are small monthly events, but the big ones are taking place only in the summer and winter.

Mr. Suers: Two times a year yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about what do you like or dislike in the collaboration with Be Event Group?

Mr. Suers: What I have told you before, the fact that they are thinking with us, out of the box, and very professional.

Interviewer: And are there any things you have discovered that you dislike about this cooperation?

Mr. Suers: Every year things get better... we notice that the relations scheme is not that good so we ask for the next year, maybe we can do something about that. If the breaks are not enough then we discuss to improve that.

Interviewer: So, you notice all these things and then you can improve from year to year.

Mr. Suers: Correct. Last year we had a little fight on the beach for example and Be Event came in between and solve it right away.

Interviewer: The next topic I want to address is about the events preferred. The first question is, what kind of experience do you want to offer to the employees? What is the purpose behind the event?

Mr. Suers: For the sports day, just fun, relax, not thinking about work and see your colleagues in a different environment

Interviewer: How are the current events you organize with Be Event Group compare to the initial idea you had when you started doing this?

Mr. Suers: Well, we started with something simple like volleyball and now we try to have an obstacle run, and with things blowing up

Interviewer: For you, how much do you think these events should last and why?

Mr. Suers: What do you mean would last?

Interviewer: How much time?

Mr. Suers: 2 to 4 hours. Normally you start from 13:00 to 17:00. They are banking employees so they are not that fit as the fitness club. For some people is too much.

Interviewer: The last question is, what else you would like to offer to your employees in terms of event content?



Mr. Suers: Sometimes, you are limited by the budget. This year we have a big budget so we can do a lot of things, but normally we don't have that much, but still want to do more and more. This year is going to be amazing because we asked for a lot of things, but I know for next year it will be a pity if we do just the normal things.

Interviewer: Thank you very much! That was really helpful and I wish you a great event in June!

Mr. Suers: You too with your school!

Appendix F – Transcript of observations

Observations TPS Groep – 29th of April

Date: 29th of April

Person observed: Organizing manager TPS Groep

Duration of the observations: 15:00 – 18:00

Location: TPS Groep Office – House Wilhelminakade 304, Rotterdam

These observations had the purpose to spot what are the main points of interest for the organizer of these outings during the unfolding of the event. The person observed was the organizing manager of TPS Groep, which is one of the stable customers of Be Event Group that organizes the same event for their trainees every 2-3 weeks. For more context, the event they organize is an interactive IPAD Game in which 2 teams are competing for points by walking or taking the water taxi from a drop-zone to another in the harbor of Rotterdam. The data from observations are being collected from the role of complete participant as the student was present to this event in the role of an instructor. After explaining the rules of the game and having the teams departing to start the game, the instructor should stay at TPS's office in order to track the teams' performance, scores and assignment and ensure a good organization of the game using the staff Ipad. In this time the organizing manager is also present in the office. By observing his/her behaviour and the interactions he/she has with the instructor about the content, unfolding and planning of the event, it can be concluded and generalized what the potential stable customers are interested in and what should Be Event Group pay attention to, in order to increase retention among these customers.

In order to collect data in a structural way a structured checklist was being used.

Checklist

1. How many times did the organizer engaged in a conversation with the instructor? For what reason?

- I. The first interaction took place when the managing organizer has welcomed my colleague and I as we were the instructors that were about to start the event with the company's trainees. He was also trying to offer us something to drink as a way of making us feel comfortable
- II. The second interaction came few minutes after, as he was enthusiastic to start faster and was asking about the exact time when the event will start.
- III. A third time the managing organizer engaged with the instructors, was when he was asking about the participants location and the current scores, therefore showing an interest about the route they take and how competitive they are
- IV. A fourth conversation took place when the organizer asked about another aspect of the game, respectively the photo and video assignments
- V. A last interaction took place when the game was almost finished as he was enquiring about the location of the teams and if they were already heading back to the office.

2. How many times did the organizer interacted with the participants during the opening or closing of the event?

The managing organizer was very careful to the participant reactions during the opening and closing of the game. He was constantly talking to them about their expectations in the beginning and about their opinion in the end.

3. Did the organizer ask anything about the content of the event? What?

There were three aspects in terms of the content of the game that the manager was interested in. The first one was the locations of the game. He was intervening during the opening presentation to make sure if he understood correctly which are the location where the challenges are positioned and how will the participants reach those places. Secondly, another aspect that he was interested in during the unfolding of the event, was the difference between the scores of the teams, showing that he is really interested in seeing how competitive is the game. Furthermore, as he knew that photo and video challenges are part of the game, he was interested in seeing what kind of photos and videos do the participant send during the game

4. Were there any concerns related to the unfolding of the events? What concerns?

One concern of the managing organizer was represented by a technical difficulty that was experienced during this event. This technical difficulty was the inability of the instructors to track the live location of one of the teams. This might have happened because of a GPS problem or a location issue experienced by one of the IPADs used by the teams. However, this issue has not happened before, and the manager's concerns were alleviated by a solution to track the teams based on the challenges they complete.

5. Has the organizer expressed any of his expectations? If yes, what expectations?

As the organizer had a dinner prepared at the end of the event, he wanted to make sure that the participants will come back and the event was going to finish in time.

6. Was there additional interaction between the organizer and the instructor related to a different topic than the above mentioned? What was the interaction about?

One aspect that the managing organizer showed an interest in, which was not related to the content of the game was regarding the closing ceremony. He was interested in knowing how the instructors are planning to close this event and what is happening once the teams are coming back.

7. Remarks about the organizer's attitude/behaviour (as perceived by the student)

- The organizing manager seemed to be accommodating and interested in the event
- He seemed very enthusiastic about giving the participants the chance to travel from a drop-zone to another using the water taxi
- He was very impressed about the interface of the IPAD game the he even wanted to show it to another present manager before the game started.
- A new thing observed in this instance was that a photographer was hired to follow the teams during the game and take picture of them while they are completing the challenges.
- Overall, he seemed really curious about all the aspects of the event and very involved in offering the participants a complete experience.

Appendix G — Tables Google Analytics and Google Search Console

Table 1 - Traffic channels for Be Event Group's website between 1st March 2022 – 30th April 2022

Totals	1,429 100% of total	1,494 100% of total	1,041 100% of total	0m 32s Avg 0%
1 Organic Search	974	1,005	726	0m 33s
2 Direct	365	395	254	0m 29s
3 Referral	80	84	59	0m 21s
4 Organic Social	8	8	2	0m 13s
5 Unassigned	2	2	0	0m 17s

Source: Google Analytics

Table 2 - Best performing keywords sorted by number of clicks- Be Event Group's website - 11th April- 3rd May

Top queries	↓ Clicks	Impressions
be event group	34	41
be events	9	17
glope events	8	13
luchtballonvaart	7	4,565
curling amsterdam	6	80
curling maastricht	6	13
teambuilding zeeland	5	78
curling limburg	5	24
buggy rijden zeeland	3	43
be event	3	35

Source: Google Search Console

Table 3 – Worst performing keywords sorted by number of clicks - Be Event Group's website - 11th April- 3rd May

Top queries	↑ Clicks	Impressions
bedrijfsuitje	0	1,248
bedrijfsuitje scheveningen	0	517
air crash investigation	0	443
events	0	413
dechi beach	0	344
event	0	336
teambuilding scheveningen	0	318
vrijstaat nederzandt	0	298
activiteiten scheveningen	0	283
powerkiten scheveningen	0	224

Source: Google Search Console