

Book review

John Armbrecht, Erik Lundberg and Tommy D. Andersson (eds),
A Research Agenda for Event Management (Elgar Research
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A Research Agenda for Event Management brings together discussions from the field of event management studies, through contributions from key authors in the subject area. The book explores advances in event management, from both positivist and constructivist approaches, culminating in a diverse research agenda from which to develop further studies.

Beginning with an introduction to the current state of play in the events industry, the book identifies the growing importance of the subject as an area of academic enquiry. Research into this area is identified from the numerous different disciplines which have historically underpinned investigation into ‘the event phenomenon’, highlighting the importance of taking a multi-disciplinary approach. Underlying themes of sustainability, social and cultural gain, and the growing importance of communities and their needs run through the book and highlight the need for additional research in these areas.

Following an introductory chapter, the book is divided into three parts: ‘Events in society’, ‘The event consumer’ and ‘The event organisation’.

Part I brings together pertinent discussions on ‘Events in society’. Investigations into sustainability, safety, impacts and event bidding are presented in relation to how the events industry affects modern society within a geographical and political context.

In chapter 2, Judith Mair addresses ‘Rethinking event sustainability’ and conceptualises new ways to integrate sustainability into events. Identifying a lack of linked-up thinking within the industry, she provides an overview of the current situation and proposes wellbeing as an overarching concept, under which liveability, viability and equity sit. Notions that events should contribute to the sustainability of the communities which host them, instead of just being ‘sustainable’, are presented and link to overarching concepts of sustainable communities and the positive impact that events can have in promoting and developing them.

Mair provides strong areas of future research within her chapter and some clear identifications of future research topics and questions which could be presented moving forward, particularly in relation to events and liveability, viability, social equity and community wellness.

‘The past, present and future of event safety research’ is discussed by Morten Thanning Vendelø in chapter 3 and starts with a presentation of the history of events, with a particular focus on crowds. This chapter takes us on a journey from the Colosseum in Rome, to 18th- and 19th-century music halls, to mass religious events, and, more recently, to sporting events and music festivals. Vendelø points to a cultural

adjustment in the wake of more recent disasters, and notes that in the past, organisers failed to see the real concerns around overcrowding, instead focusing on crowd behaviour and hooliganism.

Vendelø concludes the chapter by presenting three key emergent research themes within event safety – extreme weather and event safety, event safety in developing economies, and sexism, terrorism and event safety – and acknowledges that in the ever-changing field of event safety, external factors will always have a major impact on the direction of future research.

Chapter 4 presents ‘Event bidding: a research agenda for major and mega sport events’, by David McGillivray, Daniel Turner and John Laueremann, who begin the chapter by providing a background to the ongoing concerns around bidding for mega sporting events (MSEs). The value of hosting these events alongside a lack of accountability of bidding committees and events planners to local communities is identified, and a case for more significant research into the bidding process for these events is provided. The authors present four potential future bidding scenarios: new concessions for event hosts; reducing the level of competition within bidding competitions; lowering host standards; and moving beyond the bidding model; all of which provide new avenues from which to approach MSE bidding.

The authors close the chapter by identifying recommendations for future research, which take into consideration the political dynamics of bidding institutions and external stakeholders, the importance of tracking the evolution of the bidding process, and the role that the media (new and old) can play in the political and social context of the bid. This chapter provides a strong argument that reflects the prominent research agendas at large, not only in the bidding processes, but also in the planning and staging processes of MSEs.

Chapter 5 concludes part I, with Donald Getz’s contribution ‘Event evaluation and impact assessment: five challenges’, which presents the complexity in event evaluation and impact assessment and provides critical considerations on the subject. He notes how different value perspectives influence evaluation, and in stressing the importance of standardised methods of impact analysis identifies the need for an integrated evaluation system in all event organisations. Within this chapter impact areas are comprehensively discussed and related to the wider body of research on the subject. Stakeholder importance, particularly that of the host community, is raised and this feels like a ‘call to action’ within the narrative that identifies a need for private citizens to effect change in the way that organisations and public bodies analyse and assess impacts and the value of events.

Finally, Getz’s chapter identifies the importance of using a balanced scorecard and an event compass when analysing impacts of events which fit with a paradigm shift towards a triple-bottom-line approach linking impact assessment to sustainability overall, and the necessity of a research push is identified to clarify the utility of these approaches.

Part II sees a compilation of research on ‘The event consumer’ and provides insight into discussions on event attendees, event experiences, consumer immersion and participant events.

Eliza Kitchen and Sebastian Filep utilise a multi-disciplinary approach in chapter 6, when ‘Rethinking the value of events for event attendees: emerging themes from psychology’. They discuss a shift in event experience research towards the attendee experience, particularly in relation to the ‘psychological outcomes of events’. In doing so, they argue for further development in the area of psychological wellbeing,

particularly around the key themes of development of self-identity, sense of belonging and positive emotions.

They provide clear links to future research, strongly influenced by the above noted themes and suggest that studies around how events influence and change an attendee's psychological perception of themselves, be it through identity, belonging, sense of community or wellbeing, are needed to advance knowledge in this area.

In chapter 7, Greg Richards evaluates 'Event experience research directions' and discusses the current state of play in research and how it could progress. Richards identifies a wide body of research around events and festival experiences which looks at four discernible approaches – personal constructs, shared meaning, designed contexts and temporal ordering – to better understand the event experience. He also notes that the area of event experiences is open for the application of new and innovative research approaches due to the mainly survey-based approaches that have been taken in the past.

In closing, Richards presents emergent research within the event experience realm. The importance of experience 3.0; the co-creation and temporal nature of the event experience; and the importance of FOMO (fear of missing out) are discussed. The birth of e-sports is also noted as being worthy of investigation, along with the importance of research on technology, social media and phone apps and their impact on event experience as well as their ability to be used to collect real time data on events.

In the following chapter 8, Lena Mossberg discusses the importance of 'Managing extraordinary event experiences: understanding consumer immersion' and provides a detailed introduction into the area of immersion in events, identifying the various areas where this concept has already found traction in research: music concerts, computer games and nature-based tourism. Through discussing the need for a better understanding of consumer immersion in events, she presents an emerging theme relating to the roles which the consumer plays in immersion, the immersion process itself, alongside issues of intensity, narrative transportation and liminality, which are discussed throughout the chapter.

Overall, the importance of immersion to the extraordinary event experience is well addressed within this chapter and Mossberg provides some interesting and engaging directions for future research into this area.

Part II closes with a chapter by the book's editors, Tommy D. Andersson, John Armbrrecht and Erik Lundberg, on 'Participant events and the active event consumer', which looks at understanding the active event consumer, and thus understanding managed participant events. They present a classification of participant events and identify them through both genre and level of participant co-creation, clearly locating where each type/genre would sit on their continuum. Following on from this, they provide a strong theoretical underpinning to the area of participant events, discussing concepts of *involvement*, *serious leisure*, *event-travel careers*, and *event portfolios of event consumers*.

The identified research agendas focus on the importance of serious leisure, social worlds and identity-building, alongside investigations into participant involvement in the event, the event travel career trajectory and the event portfolio. Present throughout these agendas are the concepts of wellbeing, happiness and quality of life, which link back to discussions presented throughout the book.

In the last section – part III, 'The event organization' – the book brings the discussion of event management research to a close with chapters on event volunteering and knowledge management in events.

Within chapter 10, Karen A. Smith, Leonie Lockstone-Binney and Kirsten Holmes provide a comprehensive overview of event-volunteering research through the cataloguing of past published works in tables 10.1–10.4, classified under themes of motivation, experience, future intentions and volunteering legacies. The authors further compile all works on event volunteering by event type in table 10.5, which should prove a useful resource for any scholar wishing to investigate the study of event volunteering further.

In discussing areas for future research, the authors identify the need for a more critical approach with the study of volunteering, and a move beyond the use of qualitative surveys and single case studies. The reliance on single-case studies has limited cross-comparative studies within the area, and this, alongside the lack of diversity in case studies (their main focus is on sporting events or music festivals), is discussed as areas which future research could improve upon.

In the final chapter, Raphaela Stadler discusses the theme of ‘Knowledge management in event and festival organisations: challenges and future directions’. Stadler presents a brief discussion of the history and overview of knowledge management (KM) and how it links to the events industry, illustrating the way it has traditionally been approached and the concerns and pitfalls this can create. A comprehensive discussion of literature on the subject is presented and a compilation of key works on KM in event management is provided in table 11.1. The current state of play within academic research is discussed as well as the potential trajectory for future research on the subject of KM in events management, taking into consideration *knowledge documentation, knowledge sharing/transfer* and *communities of practice*.

Stadler identifies a number of emerging themes within the area of KM research and suggests that research should: focus on under-researched events, such as those in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industries; look to further expand the focus to all stakeholders of an organisation, not just volunteers and paid staff; look to better understand the areas of creative/artistic knowledge; and further investigate the role that power relationships play in the KM process.

Overall *A Research Agenda for Event Management* provides an interesting compilation of research topics which look at a broad range of issues at large within the current body of scholarly work being undertaken within event studies. While not completely inclusive of all areas of emergent scholarship, it provides academics and students alike with a strong base from which to further investigate the subject.