

EVENT STUDIES: DISCOURSES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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The field of Event Studies is described and its evolution considered, with specific reference to three general subdivisions or discourses. Event tourism, event management, and disciplinary perspectives are all quite different in terms of their approach to studying planned events, the concepts of interest, and related public and policy discourse. Major concepts being discussed in event management and event tourism are identified (both being highly instrumentalist in nature), while sociological and anthropological themes are examined to illustrate the disciplinary approach. In particular, major differences between the three discourses are observable in the context of how event impacts are addressed, and this is reflected in public and political discourse. The article concludes with a discussion of future directions and the need for interdisciplinary theory building.

Key words: Event studies; Discourses; Policy implications; Interdisciplinary theory

Introduction

Planned events spring from the fundamental need for economic and social exchanges; they hold many symbolic meanings, thereby constituting essential building blocks of civilization. Throughout history, events have also served as instruments of public policy, and more recently, of corporate and industry strategy. Much of the recent growth in the numbers, size, cost, and impacts of festivals and events is attributable to their instrumentalist value in serving diverse policy domains such as urban and economic development, alongside social marketing efforts to encourage community integration, participation in arts, environmentalism, and healthy

lifestyles. Mega-events in particular serve political ambitions and country branding.

The purpose of this conceptual article is to outline three major subdivisions or discourses within event studies and to connect each of them to public discourse and policy. This is accomplished firstly by means of ontological mapping through identification of the main concepts within each discourse. The core phenomenon of event studies has been defined by Getz (2007) as the study of all planned events, with particular reference to the nature of the event experience and meanings attached to events and event experiences. Other applied and professional fields such as tourism, leisure, or sport studies have overlapping interests in certain types of

events, in the uses of events for various purposes, and in the nature of experience, but within those fields planned events are only one phenomenon of many that are relevant.

Discourse

“Discourse” can be narrowly defined as a conversation, or in a more formalized way as a rule-based dialogue among parties. An event can be interpreted as a discourse. Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) viewed festivals as “arenas of discourse enabling people to express their views on wider cultural, social and political issues” (p. 103). But we are here more concerned with academic discourses pertaining to planned events.

Foucault (1969) saw discourse as a system of ideas or knowledge, with its own vocabulary. This can result in the power to monopolize communications and debate, and to enforce particular points of view. Discourse in this context is a structured line of reasoning, ideas, and approaches to knowledge creation, including theory development and practical applications. Meaning is assigned within a discourse, based on researchers’ values, so that the language and concepts define and delimit what is legitimate or expected of those contributing to it; as well, some understandings are marginalized or ignored completely. Those within a discourse might not recognize it as such, but examination of the literature reveals their existence.

How the Literature Has Evolved

Several previous reviews of the research literature have been published, including those by Formica (1998), Getz (2000), and Harris, Jago, Allen, and Huyskens (2001). Hede, Jago, and Deery (2002, 2003) reviewed special events research for the period of 1990–2002. A review of event tourism research was conducted by Getz (2008) and festival-related research has also been summarized (Getz, 2010), with both reviews identifying the three major discourses.

In the 1960s and 1970s the events sector was not recognized as an area of separate study within leisure, tourism, or recreation, all of which were rapidly growing in the academic community. As determined by Formica (1998) there were few articles related to events management or tourism

published in the 1970s—he found only four in *Annals of Tourism Research* and the *Journal of Travel Research*. A major impetus for event related research came in 1993 with the founding of the journal *Festival Management & Event Tourism* (later renamed *Event Management*).

The mid-to-late-1990s were the “take-off” years for academic institutionalization of event management, and with it a more legitimized advancement of scholarship on event tourism and event studies. This process has been roughly 25–30 years behind the equivalent for tourism, hospitality, and leisure. As the ensuing discussion will illustrate, the three discourses continue to develop along somewhat separate paths, each with their own journals that are specifically directed at event management and/or event tourism. University degree programs typically called event management have multiplied, but they often include elements of tourism and a more disciplinary-based approach to event studies.

Ontological Mapping

In philosophy, ontology is concerned with the nature of existence or reality, and in practical terms can be expressed as a question: What entities can be said to exist and how they can be grouped or classified? Within information management, “ontological mapping” concentrates on defining and linking similar concepts from different sources (often different applied fields or databases) so that a common language (terminology) can evolve. The only application found within event studies has been by Singh, Racherla, and Hu (2007), who employed this method in developing a knowledge-based system for safe festivals and events.

The method employed for this article is an extensive and constantly expanding literature review, which is daunting because of the rapid expansion of published material on festivals and events. Accordingly, only the major concepts and terminology can be covered. In more detailed, future analysis the evolution of the field should be mapped through reference to the changing concepts and terms employed by scholars, where articles have been published, themes examined, and methods employed.

The three discourses are examined in sequence, starting with the discipline-based, with emphasis on the “classical” studies from anthropology and

sociology. Then event tourism and event management are covered. How the matter of event outcomes or impacts is considered within each discourse, as this has important implications for public discourse and policy making. The article concludes with recommendations for integrating the three discourses more fully and broadening the public and policy discourses.

Three Discourses

Discipline-Based Discourse

Foundation disciplines for event studies are primarily in the humanities and social sciences (encompassing behavioral studies), all of which contribute to an understanding of the roles, meanings, importance, and impacts of planned events in society and culture. Disciplinary perspectives are clearly distinguished from the other two discourses, as event tourism is totally instrumentalist (i.e., events contribute to tourism development or place marketing), and event management applies theory to management problems. By way of summary, Table 1 lists the major foundation disciplines, providing an indication of major theoretical contributions to event studies, and suggests key policy issues and questions that are especially linked to each discipline in terms of theory or methodology.

A thorough review of each potentially relevant discipline will be an enormous undertaking, but will undoubtedly lead to much greater interdisciplinarity in event studies. By way of example, a superficial examination of cultural anthropology and sociology is provided (see Fig. 1). These can be thought of as “classical” contributions because they are the oldest, have both had substantial impact on event studies, and remain highly relevant. Filtered and adapted through the lens of leisure studies, the blend called social-psychology can also have a tremendous impact in theory building for event studies.

In cultural anthropology, Van Gennep’s 1909 work on *rites de passage* has been highly influential, while Victor Turner’s work is of critical importance: on ritual (1969), liminality and communitas (1974), pilgrimage (1979), and celebration (1982). Turner argued that “liminal” experiences are associated with ritual and the sacred, while “liminoid” experiences are part of the “profane” everyday life;

these include festivity and the carnivalesque, revelry, and role inversions. Numerous contemporary studies of specific cultural celebrations have been published in literature outside events and tourism (e.g., Cavalcanti, 2001), while two recent books make explicit connections between tourism and the cultural dimensions of festivals: Long and Robinson (2004) and Picard and Robinson (2006). A recent collection of papers on festivals in rural Australia (Gibson & Connell, 2011) combines social anthropology, history, geography, cultural, and critical studies in examining the roles and impacts of festivals in rural and aboriginal life.

Within sociology, festivals and events are often viewed as texts reflecting society’s values and structure (Abrahams, 1982, 1987; Falassi, 1987; Manning, 1983). Duvignaud’s (1976) conceptual article on the sociology of festivals and festivity provides documentation of the ways in which these phenomenon have been “explained,” including the dialectic between those, like Durkheim (1965), who viewed festivity as an “intensification of the collective being” and those who see them as being inherently subversive. Duvignaud also discussed festivity as play and commemoration, concluding there was no one correct interpretation.

It is relevant to note that Eric Cohen’s (1988) article entitled “Traditions in the qualitative sociology of tourism” identified three principal traditions that all have importance for the study of festivals and events, namely those associated with the seminal works of Boorstin, MacCannell, and Turner. Boorstin (1961), a historian, invented the term “pseudo-event” to describe contrived attractions that create a self-perpetuating system of illusions that are sought out by gullible and unsophisticated mass tourists. Cohen described him as the first in a long line of sociocritical authors in America and Europe. Much more influential was MacCannell’s (1973, 1976) sociological thesis on the tourist, which popularized the ongoing discussion of authenticity and the notion that it is sought out because of the inauthenticity of modern life. His term “staged authenticity” gained enduring popularity, and his work directly stimulated early articles on “spurious” festivals (Papson, 1981), as well as Buck’s (1977) notion of using events for “boundary maintenance” between tourists and sensitive cultural groups.

Table 1
Foundation Disciplines and Major Theoretical Contributions to Event Studies

Disciplines and Major Theoretical Contributions to Event Studies	Major Policy Implications (Sample Questions)
<p>Anthropology (Cultural) Rites, rituals, symbolism, myth, celebration, liminality, communitas, festivity, the carnivalesque (both as elements within events, and as types/themes of events) Anthropological exchange theory as a way to explain the existence of rituals and planned events, and the importance of symbolism.</p>	<p>How effective are events as catalysts in preserving and enhancing cultural traditions (i.e., authenticity vs. commodification)? Can events be employed to foster group identity (e.g., ethnic, aboriginal) and multiculturalism? Cultural impact assessment (can it be demonstrated how events establish, change or reflect traditions and values?)</p>
<p>Management Population ecology applied to organizations and whole-population studies (how events evolve in their environment) Institutional theory Stakeholder theory Economics Rational choice (or economic exchange) theory as a way to explain the necessity for planned events and the behavior of consumers Supply and demand interactions, willingness to pay, pricing, demand forecasting (generally applied through tourism, leisure and hospitality studies); failure of the marketplace Microeconomics (generally applied through business studies: event management; theories of the firm, stakeholder theory, etc.)</p>	<p>Portfolio management (what policies should be directed toward sustaining a healthy, whole population of events?) What are the best policies for creating and supporting events to meet multiple goals? How can governments justify interventions in the events sector? What pricing policies should be adopted for public and subsidized events to ensure equitable access? Economic impact assessment (establishing the necessity for full cost and benefit evaluation and public accountability, to include opportunity costs in feasibility studies, to plan for legacies that benefit everyone) Can and should policies be adopted to facilitate entrepreneurship in the events sector?</p>
<p>Ecology and Environmental Studies Environmental stressors and change processes; cumulative ecological impacts; climate change</p>	<p>How can events be utilized as interpretive and social marketing tools (e.g., pro conservation or health?) Environmental impact assessment (e.g., requiring calculation of carbon loading)</p>
<p>Geography (Human) Connecting events to the environment: spatial and temporal patterns of supply and demand for events; celebratory themes; central place theory applied to the distribution and feasibility of events; gravity models and event tourism; way-finding and movements at events</p>	<p>Public input on establishing themes for events (e.g., traditional agricultural practices) Finding ways to spread tourism demand in space and time (taking a portfolio approach) Policy to establish event tourism planning for regions</p>
<p>History and Future Studies The roles of events throughout history; evolution of specific events; life-cycles of events; events reflecting changes in society; future scenarios for events and their place in society</p>	<p>Commemorative events (what are the different perspectives and values to be considered?) How best to interpret history through events Establishing the necessity for strategic planning for events (and employing future scenarios)</p>
<p>Philosophy Phenomenology applied to studying event experiences; ethics applied to event management; aesthetics in event design; the nature and creation of knowledge about events (epistemology and ontology)</p>	<p>Should governments adopt a policy or philosophy of event service (similar to leisure services)? Providing support for knowledge creation (e.g., research, evaluation, professionalism) Requiring adoption and enforcement of codes of conduct (ethics and professionalism)</p>
<p>Political Science and Law How ideology, policy, and law affects planned events; the politics of decision-making and government intervention; policy domains related to events (e.g., health, sport, social integration); policy options and tools for the events sector; regulations affecting event management</p>	<p>What are the legal and ideological justifications for governmental intervention (or not) in the events sector? Identifying specific policy domains related to events and fully integrating event-related issues What laws and regulations are needed for the event sector?</p>

Table 1
Continued

Disciplines and Major Theoretical Contributions to Event Studies	Major Policy Implications (Sample Questions)
<p>Psychology Understanding the event experience; needs and motivations (often applied through leisure studies and social-psychology) Attitudes towards events; values; preferences for event settings and design; perceptions of crowding; interactions among people at events</p> <p>Religious Studies Rituals and religion; religious symbolism at events Pilgrimage (motivations and experiences; the pilgrimage event); sacred and secular celebrations</p>	<p>Do events foster and reinforce personal identity? What are the links between events and mental health benefits? Understanding crowd psychology and hooliganism in order to implement preventative and ameliorative action</p> <p>Should religion and government (the state) be completely separated in the events sector (with implications for symbolism, ceremonies, types of events supported) Should there be official support for pilgrimage events?</p>
<p>Sociology Events as texts reflecting societal values and structure, including power and symbolic interactions Identity: of persons, groups and places Social worlds and event careers (often applied through leisure and tourism studies and social-psychology) Social network (agent) theory Social representations of events</p>	<p>In what ways can events be used as tools for social integration and group identity building? Social impacts assessment Policy concerning the use of events as symbols, brands and propaganda Social impact assessment (the need to consider effects on lifestyle, health, well-being, etc.)</p>

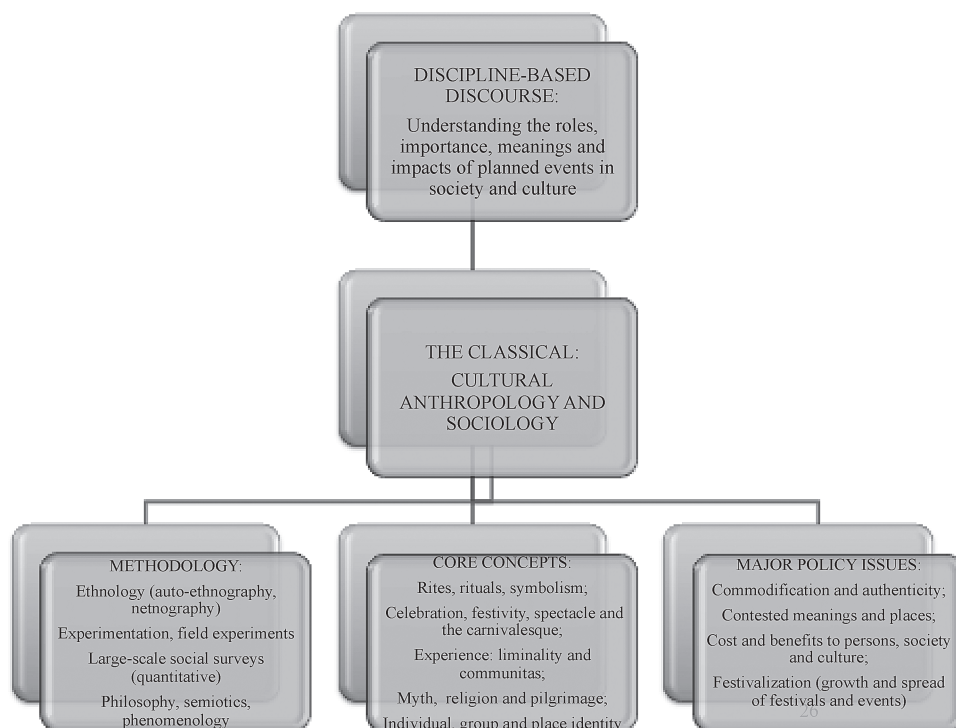


Figure 1. Discipline-based discourse: The “Classical.”

Within the tourism and events literature, commodification and authenticity have been important festival related themes. Greenwood (1972, 1989) first suggested that tourism commoditized culture, and particularly a festival, leading to the event's loss of meaning among residents. Cohen (1988) defined commoditization as a process by which things become valued in monetary terms, or exchange value. Cohen's concept of "emergent authenticity" applies to festivals; Cohen described how a re-created, tourist-oriented festival could become accepted as being authentic, over time. Thus, commoditization might lead to a festival acquiring new meanings for both tourists and residents.

One of the growing themes concerns the relationships between events and identity. Sport and other social-world pursuits are based on and give rise to personal and group identity. Personal identity building and reinforcement has been linked to being a sport fan and to sport event participation (Shipway & Jones, 2008). Green and Chalip (1998) determined that participation in a sport event was important in fostering subcultural identity for female flag-footballers. Xie (2003) employed ethnographic methods to study how an ethnic group developed a higher sense of identity through tourist-oriented performances and events.

Place identity studies include De Bres and Davis (2001), who concluded that the Rollin' Down the River Festival in communities along the Kansas River in the US, despite being characterized as an example of tourist commodification, did lead to a positive self-identification for the local community. They used mixed methods, with considerable weight given to interviews with community festival organizers. Contested place identities surrounding creation of the Parkes Elvis Revival Festival in small-town Australia were studied (through interviews with residents) by Brennan-Horley, Connell, and Gibson (2007).

While it is certainly expected that policies and strategies be subjected to criticism, usually with regard to their cost or effectiveness, or the veracity of claims about impacts, it is within various disciplinary perspectives that critical theory is applied. Critical-theory perspectives (e.g., Marxist, feminist, neocolonialist) are more at home here than within event tourism or management. By nature, event management and event tourism are based

(ontologically and epistemologically) on beliefs about their importance, and neither practitioners nor scholars are inclined to question the assumptions that underpin these applied fields. Others do, however, question the sustainability of event tourism, the distribution of costs and benefits, and the exploitation of events for crass commercial and political purposes.

Epistemologically, the "classical" discourse is highly varied, ranging from qualitative ethnographic studies favored by anthropologists to the highly quantitative social and social-psychological surveys that have influenced leisure studies and hence all other fields (including tourism and event studies) that are focused on experiences. Scholars have been examining events with regard to an increasing variety of issues and employing different theoretical perspectives. For example, Holloway, Brown, and Shipway (2010) have outlined the use of ethnography in events research. Mixed methods are now widely accepted.

Public Discourse and Policy Implications. Arising from the "classical" discourse, a logical and extremely important policy implication can be identified: Do we *need* planned events? If yes, can we then justify state intervention through direct provision or facilitation of the events sector? But it is a seldom asked question and most usually it is subsumed by debates on the economy, culture, or social problems. The answers are not completely to be found in one discipline or the other, but in a combination of theories and arguments.

Economic and anthropological exchange theories are in contrast in terms of their potential explanation for the importance of events (Marshall, 1998), but both paradigms suggest that planned events of all types are essential to the functioning of society in economic, social, and cultural terms. While the economic rationale for supporting business and tourism-oriented events is generally made explicit and widely accepted, a concomitant case for supporting celebrations and art events on purely social and cultural grounds (including their symbolic value) has been more difficult for politicians to accept.

A logical and necessary step is to firmly connect planned events to well-established policy domains that seek the same societal benefits, including

economic development and tourism, health and social welfare, education, arts, and culture. It will also be necessary to formulate a philosophy of event service, similar to the value-based approach to the provision of leisure services, sport, the arts, and culture. All this will require an acceptance of the basic principle that events of all types are essential building blocks of society, culture, and the economy. This is really a discourse on the “worth” of events.

How we evaluate events and their outcomes is a crucial factor. While economic impact assessments dominated the early stage of event-related research, there is now a growing body of theory and methods for social and cultural impact assessment, and in particular assessing resident perceptions and attitudes towards events and event tourism (e.g., Delamere, 2001; Delamere et al, 2001; Fredline, 2006; Fredline & Faulkner, 1998, 2002; Fredline, Jago, & Deery, 2003).

Most recent to be developed is the environmental dimension of event impacts (and also as instruments of environmental education). This leads directly to the implementation of sustainability criteria (encompassing triple-bottom-line, corporate social responsibility, and green criteria) as developed in books by Jones (2010), Raj and Musgrave (2009), and S. Goldblatt and Goldblatt (2011). Robertson, Rogers, and Leask (2009) believed there is general agreement that events have the potential to offer sustainable benefits, but “there is rarely clear guidance as to how this will be determined or measured in the policies that accompany festival-development projects” (p. 159). Often social and cultural goals are paralleled by tourism and place-marketing goals, raising fears of goal displacement. Getz (2009) argued for a value-based approach to event evaluation, including a triple-bottom-line and corporate social responsibility approach.

Discourse on Event Tourism

This is an instrumentalist discourse focused on the value of events to the tourism/hospitality industry, and to the policy domains of economic development and place marketing—encompassing, to a degree, urban development. Often industry and government are in partnership to develop event tourism through destination marketing organizations,

capital investment in event venues, bidding on events, and serving the needs of event organizers and attendees (including security). This is not to say that all research and literature on events and tourism is instrumentalist, but critical perspectives arise from various disciplines or from tourism studies (see Fig. 2).

Most of the pioneering published studies were event economic impact assessments, notably Ritchie and Beliveau, who published the first article specifically about event tourism in 1974—the topic being how “hallmark events” could combat seasonality of tourism demand. Event tourism expanded dramatically as a research topic in the 1980s. Two notable research articles from early in this decade include those by Gartner and Holecck (1983) on the economic impact of an annual tourism industry exposition, and Ritchie’s (1984) treatise on the nature of impacts from hallmark events, which remains a classic in terms of citations. Internationally, the Aiest (1987) conference produced a notable collection of material on the general subject of mega-events.

Bos (1994) examined the importance of mega-events in generating tourism demand, and Crompton and McKay’s (1994) article on measuring the

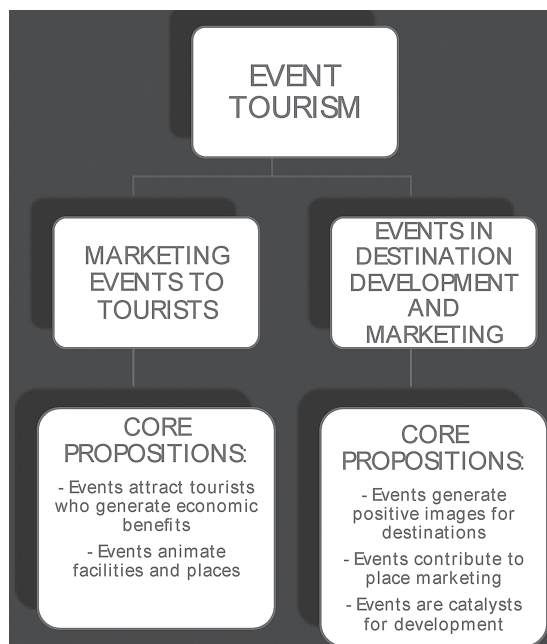


Figure 2. Event tourism discourse.

economic impacts of events set the stage for many subsequent impact studies. Crompton's many contributions also include his research-based book published by the National Parks and Recreation Association in 1999 entitled *Measuring the Economic Impact of Visitors to Sport Tournaments and Special Events*.

A very large number of research projects were commenced in Australia in preparation for the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympic Games. Faulkner et al. (2000) reported on this impressive initiative and many articles have subsequently been published. Several noteworthy articles were published right at the turn of the century, including state-of-the-art commentary and methodology for conducting event impact assessments by Dwyer, Mellor, Mistillis, and Mules (2000a, 2000b). These more or less laid to rest any debate on what needed to be done, and how to do it validly, although the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism in Australia continued (through 2009; <http://www.sustainabletourisonline.com>) to release impact studies and models (notably Jago & Dwyer, 2006). Olympic-related research continues to expand, as in each host country there arises substantial interest and criticism; this phenomenon also applies to other mega-events.

With so much attention having been given previously to the economic dimensions of event tourism, it was to be expected that scholars would seek more balance. Although research on social and cultural impacts of events goes back to occasional anthropological studies like Greenwood (1972), the conceptual overview provided by Ritchie (1984), and a noteworthy piece of sociological research by Cunneen and Lynch (1988), who studied ritualized rioting at a sport event, it can be said that the decade beginning in 2000 really ushered in a systematic and theoretically grounded line of comprehensive event impact research. This has led to important discussions on sustainability.

Australian scholars were involved with event tourism very early on, and their influence has continued, especially with substantial research funding (now terminated) from the Cooperative Research Centre program in Sustainable Tourism. Prior to the America's Cup Defense in Perth in 1988, the People and Physical Environment Research Conference (PAPER, 1987) was held under the theme

of the Effects of Hallmark Events on Cities. Soutar and McLeod (1993) later published research on residents' perceptions of that major event. One of the most influential research projects of that period was the comprehensive assessment of impacts from the first Adelaide Grand Prix (Burns, Hatch, & Mules, 1986). At the end of the 1980s, Syme, Shaw, Fenton, and Mueller (1989) published a book entitled *The Planning and Evaluation of Hallmark Events*, and Hall (1989) wrote an article on the definition and analysis of hallmark tourist events that noted the need for greater attention to social and cultural impacts.

Thorough reviews of the event tourism literature (Connell & Page, 2009; Getz, 2008) reveal five core (and interrelated) propositions that constitute fundamental beliefs (often supported by empirical research, but also reflecting conventional wisdom and ideology) about the roles of events in destination development and marketing, and about events as tourist attractions:

1. Events attract tourists (and others, such as the media) whose spending generates economic benefits; event tourism can be leveraged for maximum value.
2. Events create positive images for the destination and help brand it; portfolios of events can be designed for maximum impact, especially to overcome seasonality of demand and appeal to multiple target segments.
3. Events contribute to place marketing by making cities more livable and attractive to investors; this has been connected to the creative cities theme.
4. Events animate cities, resorts, parks, urban spaces, and venues (making them more attractive and utilizing them more efficiently).
5. Events act as catalysts for urban renewal, infrastructure development, voluntarism, and improved marketing capability (thereby creating a permanent legacy to build on).

Reflecting both institutional factors and natural demand patterns, event tourism can easily be subdivided into business events (the MICE sector), sports, and festivals and other celebrations. MICE, an acronym for meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (Schlentrich, 2008), is heavily dependent upon purpose-built facilities, either

stand-alone convention and exhibition centers, or attached to hotels and resorts. Numerous sport events can be held in venues built for residents, but destinations also compete through bigger and better sport facilities. By contrast, festivals and other cultural celebrations (e.g., carnivals, parades, and rituals) do not necessarily depend upon new facilities and are often held in public parks, streets, and multipurpose cultural facilities.

Dominating this discourse has been the assessment of economic impacts of events and event tourism, planning and marketing event tourism at the destination level, and studies of event tourism motivation and various segmentation approaches. The study of negative impacts of events and event tourism is a more recent line of research. "Festival tourism" is an important element in "event tourism," so much so that the term "festivalization" has been coined to suggest an overcommodification of festivals exploited by tourism and place marketers (e.g., Quinn, 2006; Richards, 2007).

Theory development in event tourism borrows heavily from economics and consumer behavior. In this approach, motivations for attending festivals have been studied at length, and more recently the links between quality, satisfaction, and behavior or future intentions have been modeled. Much of the knowledge base of this discourse is, however, purely "factual" (what you need to know in order to develop event tourism) and of the problem-solving kind (how to attract tourists).

Public Discourse and Policy Implications. There is an ongoing discourse in most countries about event tourism, notably about the cost of bidding and hosting events, the cost of arenas and other public infrastructure related to events hosting, and especially about the Olympics or other mega-events. The discourse surrounding London's bid and preparations for the Summer Olympic Games of 2012 has been enormous, both in mass media, research communities, and government. Key issues include: justification of cost in a time of financial weakness; what will the games really cost; and is there truly to be a social, cultural, and environmental legacy of public value?

Weed and Dowse (2009) observed considerable interest in the media and public in discussing the potential impacts of the Olympics on the UK. They

noted there were a lot of official Olympic and oppositional narratives being circulated, each serving the interests of different groups. Weed and Dowse (2009) concluded "the dominant public discourse has been about the potential to develop economic legacies" (p. 170). The Paralympic Games were seldom discussed, presumably because they were felt to offer fewer economic benefits, or were simply lumped into the overall Olympic legacy. Too much emphasis was placed on developing elite Paralympic athletes, as a legacy, and the authors worried about opportunity costs if money was taken from other programs for the disabled to pay for the mega-event. They favored using the Games to help change public and official attitudes. Most evidence supporting claims about social impacts were really opinion pieces, and the proof does not exist.

Theodoraki (2009) examined how and what the Athens Olympic Committee (2004) communicated with different audiences, over the life cycle of the event. It is stressed that there is no "best" right way of capturing all the impacts of a mega-event like the Olympics, and that they are subject to the influence of multiple stakeholders. Theodoraki concluded that consideration of impacts at the bid stage were very weak, with no quantifiable targets or commitments. Anticipated positive economic impacts were stressed by proponents. Social benefits were also raised, but there was no evidence cited to support forecasts of benefits. Postevent statements by organizers ignored sport and political impacts, and made unsupported claims about tourism and other economic gains. Environmental and social benefits were also claimed, using only opinion surveys that appeared to be public relations exercises. No real impact study was conducted after the Games. It was concluded that most of the communications from organizers were intended to create a positive image of the IOC and the Games. Pressures on staff to report only positive effects were observed. Greek officials wanted public support for infrastructure and redevelopment projects.

Preuss (2009) asserts that "Economic analysis of mega-sport events usually focus on the positive effects and legacies while ignoring opportunity cost and the efficiency of using scarce resources" (p. 131). He refers to the increasing "gigantism" of sport events which places huge financial burdens

on host cities and leads to the necessity for senior levels of government to back mega-events. This cost, and questions related to the sustainability of events, has fuelled academic debate. Most impact assessments fail to consider opportunity costs, which leads to Preuss stating that only cost–benefit assessment is suitable—and that method tends to ignore intangibles.

Best (2009) said that claims about the non-sporting benefits of sports (and sport events) are largely unsubstantiated by empirical research. Health benefits are known to accrue from activity, but this is not the same as claims that sport leads to improved health. Because of the known difficulties in establishing cause and effect, more theoretical approaches are being developed: theory-based evaluation, theories of change, logic models, and scientific realism. But policy makers wanting simplistic answers might not be happy with complex theoretical explanations of impacts. Best referred to the IOC undertaking to conduct an impact study for the London 2012 Olympics covering the period 2003–2014, but claimed the 73 mandatory indicators (such as more hours devoted to school sports) are of limited value because they cannot validly be attributed to hosting the mega-event. The research community needs more theory and better methodology, including more rigor when assessing event impacts.

Typically there is little discussion, either public or within the research community, about the myriad small events held every day. Within the context of an event tourism portfolio, most small events have little value—they simply cannot attract enough tourists to make them the object of industry attention. Also not talked about is the future of events, and especially event tourism under any number of harsh future scenarios that incorporate scarce fossil fuels, high transport costs, and growing ecological and political problems around the world. This pessimistic scenario was raised by Getz (2007) in *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, with the conclusion that events will become more, not less important, if tourism disappears or becomes extremely rationed on cost.

Discourse on Event Management

This is the most recent discourse to develop in the research literature, even though professional

practice of event management has a much longer history. The first major textbook on this subject was J. Goldblatt's (1990) *Special Events: The Art and Science of Celebration* and Goldblatt has remained at the forefront of event management studies and professional development through multiple books. This was followed closely by Getz (1991) with the book *Festivals, Special Events and Tourism*, and a year later came Hall's (1992) book *Hallmark Tourist Events: Impacts, Management and Planning*. Uysal, Gahan, and Martin (1993) in the very first issue of *Festival Management & Event Tourism* began an enduring research theme on motivations to attend festivals and events, while Wicks and Fesenmaier (1993) looked at service quality at events—making a strong connection to hospitality studies.

Reviewing the literature, it is clear that an explosion of educational programs, books and research articles on event management has occurred in the two ensuing decades. If we can draw inferences from the life cycles of closely related fields, especially leisure and tourism studies that became established in the 1970s and 1980s, then event management will likely continue to grow and spread globally for at least another decade before peaking. This constitutes a diffusion curve that inevitably results in maturity and potentially decline. Those event management programs wanting to remain healthy will have to evolve into Event Studies, based on sound research and theory development, otherwise declining student numbers will cause many to shrink or disappear.

Numerous introductory texts have been published, including quite a few with multiple editions. The most recent are: Raj, Walters, and Rashid (2008); Allen, O'Toole, Harris, and McDonnell (2011); Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, and McDonnell (2011); J. Goldblatt (2011). As well, there are many more practical books from the event practitioners' point of view, such as the series written by Judy Allen (2008). The field has evolved to the point where the emphasis is now on specific elements of event management, including: entertainment (Sonder, 2003); design (Berridge, 2007); human resources (Baum, Deery, Hanlon, Lockstone, & Smith, 2009; Van der Wagen, 2006); risk (Silvers, 2008; Tarlow, 2002); project management and logistics (O'Toole & Mikolaitis, 2002);

feasibility (O'Toole, 2011); sponsorship (Skinner & Rukavina, 2003); resources (Matthews, 2008); operations (Tum, Norton, & Wright, 2006); marketing (Hoyle, 2002) and communications (Masterman & Wood, 2006); sustainability and green operations (Jones, 2010; Raj & Musgrave, 2009). The *Routledge Handbook of Events* (Page & Connell, 2012) is an edited collection reflecting the state of the art in event-related research and theory.

As well, the management of specific types of events has been addressed in books: on arts and cultural festivals (Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond, & McMahan-Beattie, 2004); on international food and wine festivals (Hall & Sharples 2008); sports (Graham, Goldblatt, & Delpy, 1995; Mallen & Adams, 2008; Masterman, 2004; Solomon, 2002; Supovitz & Goldblatt, 2004); on meetings and conventions (Allen, 2008; Fenich, 2005; Rogers, 2007); exhibitions (Morrow, 1997; Robbe, 1999); and the Olympics (Theodoraki, 2007).

EMBOK, the Event Management Body of Knowledge (Silvers, Bowdin, O'Toole, & Nelson, 2006) has been created by practitioners and academics to codify the skills and knowledge required by professional event managers. There are five main knowledge domains: administration; design; marketing; operations; and risk, each with numerous subdivisions. Much of this knowledge base has to come from business or managerial literature. For example, "marketing mix" and "stakeholder management" are generic. The managerial and problem solving skills needed by professionals are stressed, whereas theory is not addressed. EMBOK also has implications for licensing and cross-border job mobility (see Fig. 3).

Theory specific to event management has been slow to develop and currently depends heavily on application of generic management and business theory, plus theory filtered through the closely related fields of tourism and hospitality. Theory from other disciplines is being applied to the fundamental questions of event and event tourism motivation (including the issue of need), decision making, and personal outcomes or benefits. This line of research and theory development draws heavily from social-psychology as mediated through leisure studies. The same goes for theory on the event experience and personal meanings, while the social and economic meanings

of events relate more to the classical discourse and economics.

A full "ontology" of event management has yet to be constructed. It should pinpoint and interrelate the key terms and concepts that are unique and/or essential to this professional field. For example, what does "social entrepreneurship" mean in the not-for-profit festivals sector? It has not been addressed. Or, how are event "stakeholders" typically organized (see Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2007) and is the stakeholder management process different for festivals or major sport events (Andersson & Getz, 2008; Parent & Seguin, 2007)?

Public Discourse and Policy Implications. It cannot be expected that the media and public will pay much attention to event management until something goes wrong. Then their management and the issue of professionalism leap into the media and public consciousness. Unfortunately, tragedy strikes at events too often, and the risks associated with mass assemblies are so great that risk management and security are absolute requisites for all educational programs in this field. Because events have become institutionalized, that is accepted as normal, necessary, and permanent, the public has a right to expect professionalism and healthy, safe event experiences. The underlying workings of event design and management are largely exercised in private. It is reasonable to expect more and more regulation of the event sector, higher levels of professionalism including licensing by governments and a multiplication of certification systems reflecting various specializations and associations.

A certain amount of attention can be expected regarding the availability of event related educational and training opportunities for youth or adults, but that is more of a human resource issue. Colleges and universities make pertinent decisions without public consultation, as a rule, relying on forecasts of student demand and revenue to guide the growth or decline of applied fields. Hence, we can expect event management education to peak and decline at some point soon in those countries where it is already well established (e.g., Australia and the UK).

Conclusions

Although it might appear to be an arcane academic exercise, ontological mapping is a necessary

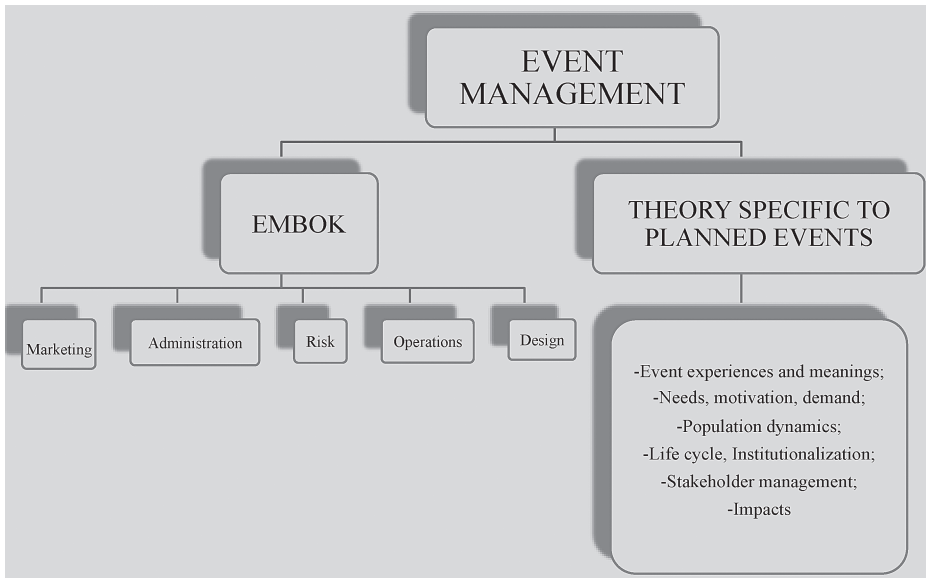


Figure 3. Event management discourse.

prerequisite to understanding the evolution of new fields such as event studies and the discourses that occur within them. Without assessing the methodologies, topics, concepts, and terminology being employed, it is difficult to know what is being argued, theorized, concluded, or questioned. These academic discourses are influenced by the epistemological backgrounds and ontological positions of researchers, where they work within universities (e.g., business schools versus social sciences), the journals they publish in, and their perceptions of real-world relevance.

Many disciplines and fields of study are actively conducting research on planned events, but mostly without integration. Those scholars who are only active within the discourses of event management and event tourism will be very selective in their searches, as both discourses are instrumental—not theoretical—in orientation. It is up to those who consider themselves to be event scholars to assess and interpret the vast and rapidly growing literature from many disciplines and fields. From this integrative work interdisciplinary theory for planned events can arise.

Each discipline should be examined for its event related relevance. In this article, only the so-called “classical” discourse arising from cultural anthropology and sociology has been broadly mapped. A

more refined analysis will require a systematic sampling of the literature over many years, employing software that can identify themes, interconnect similar terms, and develop hierarchies of concepts. Such analysis also enables the identification of broad and narrow discourses, clusters of researchers who publish on various topics, the emergence of new themes, and linkages to other literature.

Impact Assessment and Evaluation

The three discourses tend to emphasize quite different dimensions of event impacts, replete with different methodologies and measures. Event tourism stresses very specific desired outcomes, and so the literature is dominated by economic impact assessments stressing income and employment gains, followed by image change and branding effects. It appears to be extremely difficult for proponents of event tourism in general, and mega-events in particular, to acknowledge the full costs and to conduct and publish full cost–benefit evaluations. There is sufficient knowledge in the literature to fully inform the policy makers and marketers of the appropriate and necessary, but the literature is very thin on actual applications. A lack of agreement on measures for comparing environmental, social, cultural, and economic outcomes has impeded progress.

Event management, as a discourse, is focused on improving events in all areas and so it should be open to the full range of impact issues. Nevertheless, as a very new professional field, the emphasis in the academic/research literature has been on very practical matters reflecting the EMBOK model—that is, what managers need to know and how to do it. Measures of efficiency and effectiveness are of primary concern to event managers: Did we utilize our resources in the best way possible to achieve our goals? Research methodology is largely derived from economics (impacts again) and consumer behavior (i.e., marketing), with numerous studies of tourism impacts, motivation to attend, customer satisfaction, and future intentions. More aspects of management theory are now being applied to events, including stakeholder and institutional theory, and organizational ecology.

A broader view of impacts and how to assess them (e.g., more use of mixed methods) is influencing event management. This trend draws from disciplines other than management and economics, and in particular the “classical discourse” based in sociology and anthropology. The field is also increasingly being influenced by various critical theory perspectives that connect to philosophy and other fields such as cultural, rural, media, and performance studies, or with a gender or feminist studies influence. This trend will undoubtedly broaden, resulting in a healthier discourse. A big question, however, is whether or not academics can influence the public discourse and policy making.

Public Discourse and Policy Implications

Public discourse and policy making should be informed by research and theory, or even directly influenced by knowledgeable academics. But there is seldom a bridge evident between these domains. The whole area of knowledge transfer should be an important research topic, and in return academics should be influenced in their research and teaching by what is actually debated in public and government.

It is easy to conclude from the evidence presented in the media and in the scant academic literature on this subject, that what gets discussed about events generally reflects power and elitism in society. Mega-events in particular are represented as being public goods, well worth the enormous

investment, while opposition is labeled as being unpatriotic or mean-spirited. Seldom is opportunity cost considered. Events are portrayed as being green or sustainable, despite the obvious holes in the cases presented (i.e., failure to account fully for energy consumed and waste); mainly purported, not proven benefits are reported and comprehensive cost–benefit evaluations are nowhere to be found. The prevailing rhetoric about mega-events, and to a large extent all the events that are bid on by tourism authorities and event development agencies, reflect a particular bias towards industry, place marketing, and development. Numerous other events are largely ignored, presumably because they are too small to be of value to development and marketing.

Yet the public discourse is growing, and media are more alert to the detailed issues. The emergence of global, instant, and personal communications is important here, as social media can cover and discuss what every person is thinking and doing. Issues and problems cannot be removed from the public’s view.

The Future of Event Studies

Event-related research and discourse continues to expand, and if Event Studies is to bring all the themes and theories together there is a need to continue with more detailed analysis of the literature. While it is possible to monitor the core, event related research journals, as well as to reasonably summarize the material appearing in the journals of closely related fields (i.e., leisure, sport, tourism, and hospitality), the task of collecting and analyzing pertinent literature from the periphery in many disciplines is more challenging. Ontological mapping will therefore provide only an approximation of the breadth and depth of event studies.

All of the discipline-based subjects are pertinent to event tourism and event management, but do not necessarily get incorporated into professional curricula and training. To the extent that these “classical” themes are increasingly entering the public and political discourse, they will have to become part of professional education.

If we can base a future assessment on the evolution of similar applied fields of study, notably leisure, sport, arts, hospitality, and tourism, all of

which share a strong theoretical and practical interest in experiences, then event management will evolve (at least in research-oriented universities) into Event Studies. An alternative future sees it merging with one or more of these fields, wherein it will lose its identity, or perhaps entering into a partnership with other fields to form a new focus on Experience Design or Experience Studies. In either case, the need remains for greater interdisciplinarity.

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