

Aligning Sustainable Event-Tourism Research with UN Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

Event-tourism is defined as events that “comprise a key element in both the origin area (i.e., events are an important motivator of tourism) as well as within the destination area (i.e. events feature prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations).” (Getz, 2017). Within event-tourism, there has not been any research in sustainability in terms of the interconnection between event tourism and resilience of the event organizer, attendees, as well as local community (Laing, 2018).

With this in mind, this study addresses the following research questions: 1) What is the future direction or priorities that event management researchers need to focus on in terms of sustainable event-tourism development? 2) How can EM research align with UN Sustainable Development Goals? 3) Do business decisions in the process of sustainable event tourism have positive impact on all event stakeholders?

Literature Review

Stakeholder theory has its roots in the organizational management literature that examines the relationships between an organization and its various groups that have an interest in the organization (Freeman, 2001). In the event conceptualization domain, stakeholder theory can be operationalized as the relationships among the event and its suppliers, employees/volunteers, sponsors, attendees and participants, community organizations, and others. Drawn from the stakeholder theory, this study posits that sustainable event-tourism development process has positive impact on all stakeholders.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, was implemented on January 1, 2016, to address urgent global challenges. The plan provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At core of the plan are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that build on decades of work by countries and the UN, including the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. These goals are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership and recognize that ending

poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests (United Nations). The ultimate goal of sustainable event tourism should be long-term sustainable growth or value where all stakeholders of events remain healthy and viable (Getz, 2017). To that end, this research aims to bridge the gap between the current research/industry practices and accomplishing the UN SDGs, which in turn will benefit all event-tourism stakeholders.

Methodology

To begin, a systematic literature review was conducted to identify sustainability articles in the event tourism sector. The Clarivate Web of Science database was used to pull the citation data of journal articles based on the search words/phrase “sustainable event tourism”. The initial Web of Science search specified that results must be peer reviewed journal articles and the potential articles equated to 461 for subsequence coding. The researchers will develop an initial coding scheme to further classify the collected articles based on stakeholders, event type, and the seventeen UN SDGs. Some steps are expected to be either repeated or adjusted in an effort to validate the method and the coding analysis based on initial results. Those tasks include but not limited to hand searching additional articles in event specific journals, reviewing individual articles, and revising the coding scheme.

The completion of coding analysis will allow us to map out the key stakeholders in terms of sustainable event tourism sector the specific issues or problems addressed in the study in terms of sustainability. It will also inform us about how the prior research topics align with the seventeen UN SDGs. With evidence from the previous literature and coding procedure, a Delphi technique, which is an acceptable method to gather insight from experts in a specific field (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), will be subsequently conducted to determine if the identified key stakeholders in the event-tourism sector agree with the findings of the study.

Expected Findings and Implications

Event management research is maturing in number of publications and topics addressed through the research. One of the key areas that has emerged is the sustainable development of event-tourism sector. This study makes a few crucial contributions in continuing the momentum and leading it in the right direction. First, identifying and involving key stakeholders of the industry in this research will allow us to better understand real world challenges specific to different aspects of sustainable development of event tourism. Aligning this growing field of study with UN SDGs can provide practical guidelines for the industry to implement and for researchers to follow up and address through a scientific approach. For example, social impact of events may be considered most important from the industry viewpoint while academic research lags behind on this particular area. Finally, the unique approach to collecting and analyzing data from both scientific research and a panel of industry experts will provide novel insight into how research priorities should be tackled in line with UN SDGs, given specific positions and circumstances of each stakeholder in the event-tourism sector.

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