A Critical Reflection on the Survivability of Recurring Events

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Abstract

Recurring events—such as annual marathons and fireworks festivals—are important organizational endeavours for their host communities because of their economic, social and environmental impacts and the opportunities they offer local stakeholders to leverage those events toward their own goals (Getz & Page, 2022). Since Getz's (2002) seminal work *Why Festivals Fail*, researchers have identified various success and failure factors influencing event survivability (e.g., service quality, marketing, resources, stakeholders, resilience, innovation: Carlsen et al., 2010; Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022; Getz & Andersson, 2009; Nordvall & Heldt, 2017; Tkaczynski et al., 2022). Nevertheless, I argue that our understanding of why and how recurring events ultimately cease to exist remains incomplete. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to synthesize theoretical discussions in the event management literature to critically reflect on current knowledge on event survivability. By reviewing articles published in the seven major event-studies journals—along with works they reference and those citing them—I identified and organized the key conceptual and theoretical approaches applied to this domain (e.g., service-dominant logic, stakeholder and network theory, triple bottom line, and organizational ecology). Most notably, although some approaches address temporality (e.g., event lifecycle models and the theory of temporal organizations), the use of process data—specifically the timing and sequence of incidents, selections, and actions—to theorize event survivability has been scarce (cf. Langley et al., 2013). After highlighting the academic and practical value of this alternative meta-theoretical approach, I recommend longitudinal multiple-case studies as a promising methodology for future research.

Keywords: event management; festival management; narrative review; theory development; process theorizing