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CONTEMPORARY POLICY DEBATE

The 'long tail' of event management research: evidence from the field's main journals

Emmy Yeung and Rhodri Thomas

School of Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management,

Leeds Beckett University, UK

Introduction

Strategies to gain academic acceptance for emerging fields such as event management tend to involve a predictable set of activities. These include the creation of specialist peer reviewed journals and learned societies that improve the quality of outputs and advance the interests of members, respectively. Vocational fields gain legitimacy by also creating a unifying discourse that articulates with other stakeholders, usually employers, which is then used to persuade policy-makers (from university managers to government departments) of the veracity of their claims to distinctiveness, coherence and intellectual rigour (Tribe, 1997; Thomas & Thomas, 2013).

Several commentators have reviewed advances in research relating to this field (e.g. Park & Park, 2016; 2017; Thomas and Bowdin, 2012). The most comprehensive of these in the context of tourism is Getz and Page's (2016a) highly cited work and their closely aligned book entitled events studies (Getz and Page, 2016b). They propose a framework for categorising research and offer an ambitious assessment of progress and prospects. Inevitably, their evaluation is mixed so they helpfully propose a route to strengthening quality and significance. Draper et al., (2018) offer a novel analysis of the research design and methods used in events research over a twelve-year period. The growth in the number of empirical papers published in a selection of events, tourism and hospitality management journals is taken to confirm a positive evolution of the field.

The tendency of some authors to conflate the fields of event management (or studies) with tourism and hospitality management (or studies) is probably a reflection of its provenance. Faced with either declining recruitment for existing courses and/or a recognition of the market opportunities provided by event management, most programmes (and researchers) emerged from tourism and hospitality management schools or business schools. This is inconsequential unless debates become circumscribed by this historical quirk of circumstance. There is a suggestion that they do. It is curious, for example, that Draper et al. (2018) consider papers only from a selective list of journals in events, tourism and hospitality management yet make claims about event management research, rather than event tourism or event management and tourism research. For some, the interpretation of the boundary of the former is somewhat arbitrary and not inclusive of rigorous research on, for example, the political sociology or political economy of events (e.g. Binnie & Klesse, 2018; Trubina, 2019), the economics of events (e.g. Li, Blake and Thomas, 2013) or events history (e.g. Voigt, 2016; 2019) published in 'mainstream' disciplinary journals. Although not taken up here, we suggest that there is a need for greater debate on this matter (see Spracklen and Lamond, 2016; Robertson et al., 2018) especially as this is probably not consistent with how event scholars construct their professional identities (Dashper and Fletcher, 2019).

One common finding of most review articles is their confirmation of an expanding body of literature with varying degrees of quality depending upon the topic. This note addresses different questions,

namely: how internationally dispersed is research activity in this field and how concentrated is research output? Although undoubtedly less significant than the potential contribution of meticulous state-of-the-art reviews, these questions are worthy of consideration because they prompt further thinking about the current state of the field and its prospects by drawing in additional ideas.

Research design

In order to establish the international concentration (or dispersion) of research undertaken by those most likely to consider themselves event scholars, outputs from the four most prominent dedicated journals in the field were selected: Event Management; International Journal of Event and Festival Management; Journal of Convention and Event Tourism; Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events. Although not a precise delineation, this is more likely to yield a perspective that emphasises this field.

Records from the four event journals were downloaded from Scopus on 22nd Jan 2020. This amounted to 1295 items. Filters were used to include only articles (research notes, conference reports, editorials, viewpoints, and related publications were excluded) for the decade 2009-2019. For the Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, only events related papers were included. This process resulted in a final count of 861 papers (Event Management - 422; International Journal of Event and Festival Management - 175; Journal of Convention and Event Tourism - 171; Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events - 93) which were used for the analysis that follows.

How international is event management research?

Since the goal was to gain an impression of the geographical spread of research outputs by country, very little analysis of individual outputs was undertaken. Where it did take place, it was to assess any evidence of institutional scores being distorted significantly by particularly prolific individuals. This was found not to be the case. In what follows, only the top ten institutions are usually reported. This, we anticipate, is enough to prompt the debate we hope will ensue because in almost all cases there is a sharp drop in numbers after the top ten (i.e. there is a long 'tail'). It is important to emphasise that the small counts in the disaggregated data severely limit the depth of analysis that is possible; the observations made below are, therefore, offered tentatively with the sole aim of precipitating discussion about the international orientation of academic research and researchers in event management.

Table 1 Total number of papers produced by university

Rank	University and country	Number of papers
1	University of Queensland, Australia	38
2	Griffith University, Australia	33
3	Bournemouth University, UK	28
4	North-West University, South Africa	25
5	Leeds Beckett University, UK	23
6	University of Technology Sydney, Australia	18
7	University of Central Florida, USA	17
8	Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong	15
9	University of Florida, Gainesville, USA	13
10	University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA	13

Source: Scopus

As Table 1 suggests, there is a concentration of outputs from universities in Australia (which between them account for 40% of the top ten most prolific institutions), the UK (23%) and the USA (19%). The composition of Editorial Advisory Boards for the journals considered in this study suggest a greater international spread of activity. The International Journal of Events and Festivals Management is the least diverse in this respect, drawing its membership from six countries and, at seventeen, the Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events is conspicuously the most international in its orientation. The most senior editorial roles of all four journals are, however, held by academic researchers working in Australia, USA and the UK.

A similar picture emerges when prolific sole authors are considered. As Table 2 shows, the production of single authored papers over the past decade came from schools or departments, with two exceptions, located in Australia, the USA and UK. This may reflect linguistic advantages (or bias) since only English language journals were considered.

Table 2 Single authored papers by institution.

Rank	University and country	Number of papers
=1	Leeds Beckett University, UK	10
=1	University of Queensland, Australia	10
3	Bournemouth University, UK	6
4	University of Westminster, UK	5
=5	Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand	4
=5	Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands	4
=5	Griffith University, Australia	4
=5	Monash University, Australia	4
=9	Sheffield Hallam University, UK	3
=9	University of New Orleans, US	3
=9	University of Sunderland, UK	3
=9	University of Technology Sydney, Australia	3

Source: Scopus

A review of multiple authorship is perhaps more revealing of the priorities and practices at an institutional level. Papers with multiple authors were examined to see the extent to which joint projects were shared among colleagues within an institution, between institutions in the same country or whether collaboration occurred internationally. The findings are contained in Tables, 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3 Multiple authored papers – institutional collaboration.

Rank	Institution and country	Number of papers
1	North-West University, South Africa	22
2	Griffith University, Australia	10

=3	Bournemouth University, UK	7
=3	University of Technology Sydney, Australia	7
=5	Sheffield Hallam University, UK	6
=5	University of Central Florida, USA	6
=5	University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA	6
=8	University of Derby, UK	5
=8	University of Houston, USA	5
=8	University of Queensland, Australia	5
11	The College of Charleston, Charleston, USA	4

Source: Scopus

Table 4 Multiple authored papers – national collaboration.

Rank	Institution and country	Number of papers
1	University of Queensland, Australia	11
2	Griffith University, Australia	10
=3	Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), USA	7
=3	University of Central Florida, USA	7
=5	University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA	6
=5	University of South Carolina, USA	6
=7	Clemson University, USA	5
=7	East Carolina University, USA	5
=7	Florida International University, USA	5
=10	Leeds Beckett University, UK	4
=10	North Carolina State University, USA	4
=10	University of Minho, Portugal	4
=10	University of Technology Sydney, Australia	4

Source: Scopus

Table 5 Multiple authored papers – international collaboration.

Rank	Institution and country	Number of papers
=1	Bournemouth University, UK	12
=1	Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong	12
=1	University of Queensland, Australia	12
=4	University of Brighton, UK	11
=4	University of Florida, Gainesville, USA	11
6	Griffith University, Australia	9
=7	Curtin University, Australia	8
=7	Gothenburg University, Sweden	8
=9	University of Manitoba, Canada	7
=9	Victoria University, Australia	7

=9	Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand	6
=12	Leeds Beckett University, UK	6
=12	Texas A and M University, USA	6
=12	University of Calgary, Canada	6
=12	University of Canberra, Australia	6

Source: Scopus

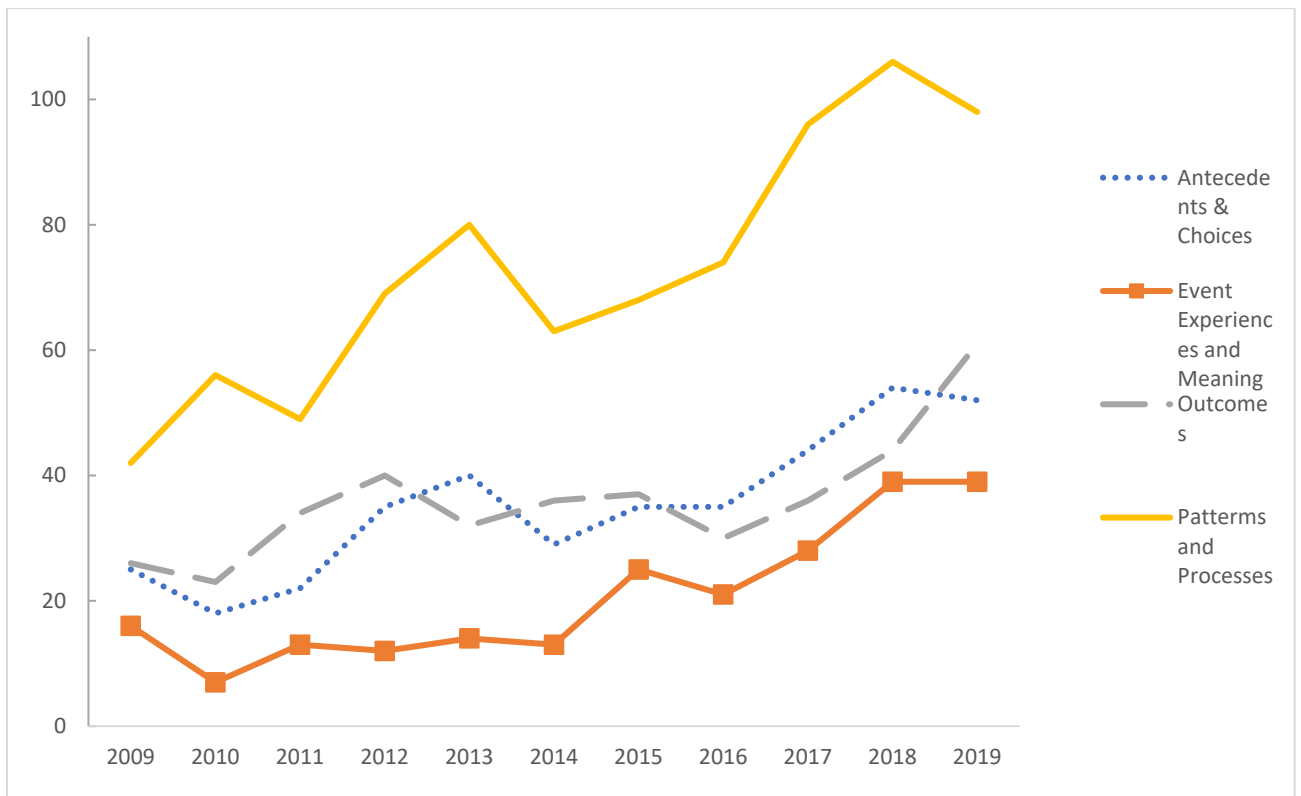
Perhaps the most striking aspect of these data is how few of the universities are present in all tables. Indeed, Griffith University, Australia, and The University of Queensland, Australia, are the only two institutions to appear in each table. One interpretation of the findings is that these institutions display a maturity of practice and orientation. Alternatively, they may reflect differing institutional policies that encourage and reward or discourage and penalise particular practices (e.g. sole authorship, international collaboration etc.). That, in turn, might also reflect the national policy frameworks and methods of evaluating university research performance.

That only two of the field's leading institutions (defined here as those who have produced the most papers in the field's dedicated journals) operate at all levels may also imply a lingering immaturity elsewhere. It is hard to imagine that leading schools in more established disciplines or fields would not be operating locally, nationally and internationally. This should not be over-stated, given the relatively small numbers of papers and institutions involved.

Are thematic concerns parochial?

The 4288 keywords associated with the 861 papers were examined to see whether they offered insights into the maturity of the field. Keywords were classified in two ways. Firstly, using Getz and Page's (2016b:8) classification which has five categories: antecedents and choices (e.g. needs, motives, contexts, influences); outcomes (e.g. personal, societal); planned event experiences and meanings (e.g. personal, cultural); patterns and processes (e.g. spatial, temporal, policies); managing events (e.g. goals, strategies). They label these as 'the core phenomenon'. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of keywords using this organising framework over the past decade apart from 'managing events' which is dealt with separately in Figure 3. It appears that the field started with a particular orientation that has remained relatively stable; outputs have grown in all categories but in very similar proportions. This may imply a conservatism among event scholars.

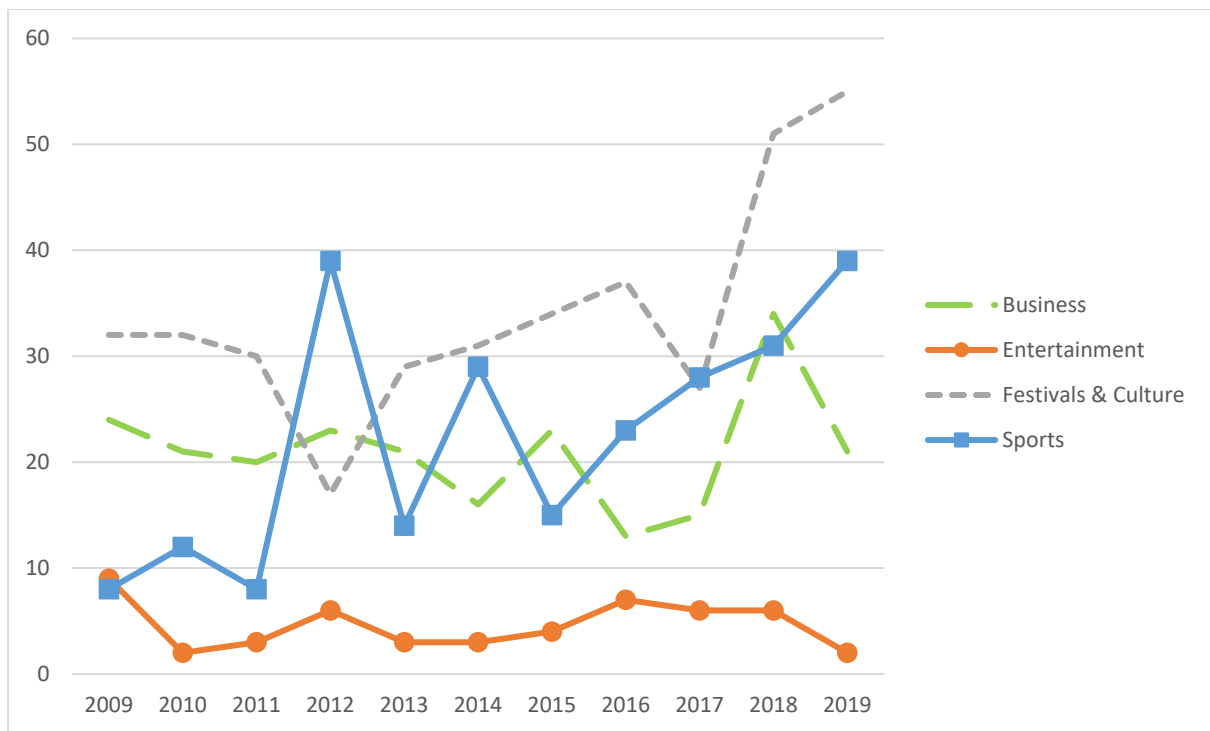
Figure 1 The 'core phenomenon'



Source: Scopus

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of keywords based on Getz and Page’s (2016a:594) typology of planned events and venues. Research on festivals and cultural aspects of events has remained a dominant interest over the past decade. Sports events research has tended to reflect major sports competitions taking place in western countries, notably the Olympic games. Whether this implies a domestic (parochial) concern is a moot point and would require more detailed analysis to arrive at a definitive answer. Such an investment of time would be disproportionate to the value of the insight, but this exploratory review suggests the question of international research significance might be explored further by those leading the field.

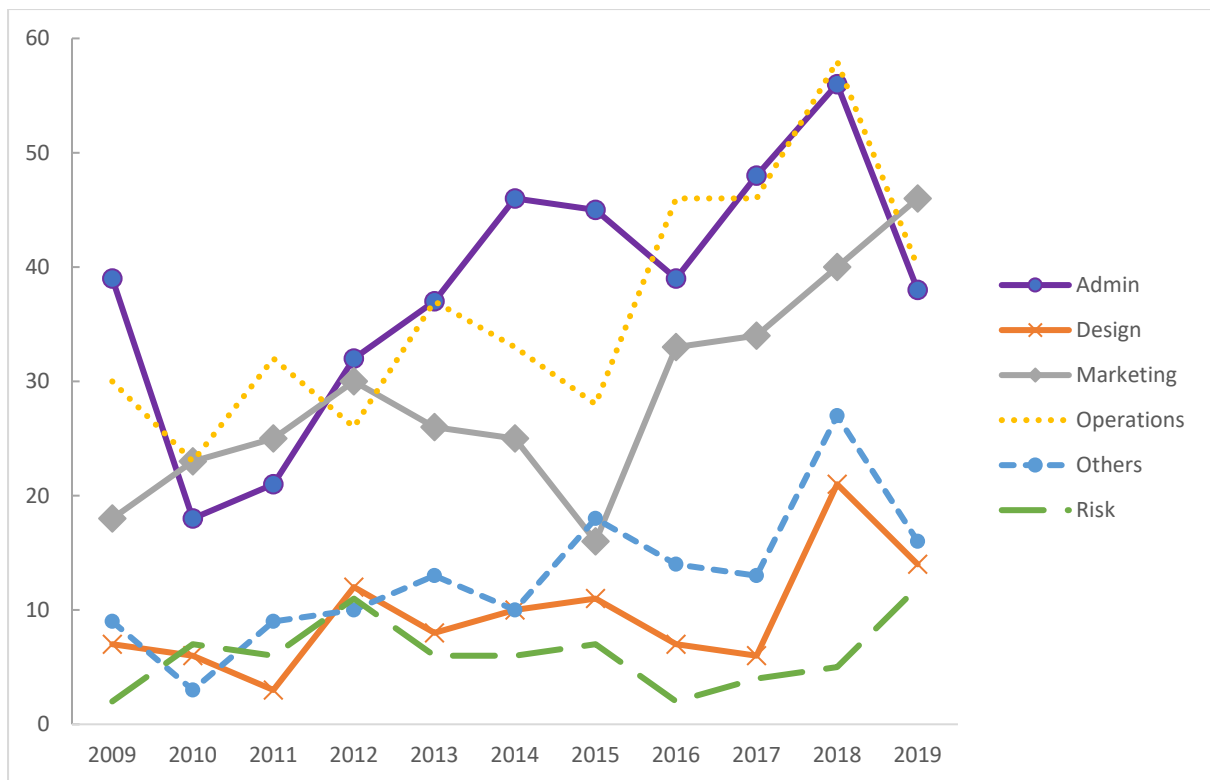
Figure 2 Typology of planned events and venues.



Source: Scopus

Relevant keywords were also analysed using the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) (Silvers and Rutherford, 2009). Figure 3 shows the breakdown of different domains of knowledge contained within that framework. An interest in operations research has continued but there has been a growing concern with event marketing. The number of risk-related papers will probably attract more attention considering the current Covid-19 pandemic. As this phenomenon is global, it is difficult to see at this stage whether such endeavour reflects national or international concerns.

Figure 3 Trends in keywords using EMBOK as an organising framework



Source: Scopus

The analysis of keywords has severe limitations. If nothing else, it is a system of classification that plays to the idiosyncrasies of authors and how they choose to describe their work. More sophisticated data mining techniques using abstracts or articles would yield a much more valuable picture (see for example Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2018). Nevertheless, even if what has been presented here does not confirm parochial concerns, it does not provide obvious countervailing evidence. A debate about the international development of event management as a distinctive field of study, therefore, remains desirable.

Conclusion

Event management displays the trappings of a field that is gaining academic respectability. It has learned societies, specialist publications, research degree programmes, official recognition as a distinctive occupational category, employer engagement and international exchange of ideas and insights. Yet, evidence from the field's main journals suggests a geographically concentrated community of linguistically advantaged scholars that dominate the academy. Most tend to collaborate on research within their own institutions and countries. The topics researched may also be dominated by domestic concerns. If event management research is to flourish, a more expansive outlook that crosses international boundaries is probably necessary.

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