

RESEARCH NOTE

USING JOB ADVERTISEMENTS TO ADVANCE EVENT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

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Continued progress in the tourism industry and rapid technological advances have pointed to the continued need for well-educated managers in the event sector. Attempts at professionalizing have also identified formal tertiary education and industry training to be significant components in these efforts, and although there is a clear association between education and the needs of the industry, the correlation has often been questioned. This discussion examines the prevailing, but limited discourse on event management skills and attributes, analyzes its implications, and offers several explicit research propositions to advance knowledge using job advertisement analysis. These suggestions will be of benefit to formal education providers and the event sector as an international agenda for event management skilling is advanced.

Key words: Event management skills; Event management attributes;
Event management education; Event management professionalization;
Tourism job advertisements; Tourism job analysis

Introduction

Event management has emerged as a fast-growing sector and especially so in countries that have developed a strong event portfolio in terms of the number and scale of events offered (Arcodia, 2009; Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2012; Malen & Adams, 2017). This notable expansion has been accompanied by an increasing recognition that

events can be a potential source of attractiveness and competitiveness for tourism destinations (Abreu-Novais, Ruhanen, & Arcodia, 2016; Getz & Page, 2016). From an economic perspective, events can act as important economic drivers and minimize effects of seasonality (Connell, Page, & Meyer, 2015) and help attract investment (Quinn, 2010). Events can also have positive social outcomes (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006) that governments are progressively

recognizing. Given the expanding influence of the events, their potential for positive impact, and with greater efforts at professionalization (Arcodia & Reid, 2002, 2003, 2005; Thomas & Thomas, 2013), there is an enduring need to prepare event managers who can plan and deliver them (Mallen & Adams, 2017). Key to professionalization is education and training and understanding the specific needs of the industry has continued to receive attention from both practitioners and educators (Mallen & Adams, 2017; Padron & Stone, 2019).

One approach used to understand the specific needs of the industry is the analysis of job advertisements to ascertain the desired skills and attributes sought by employers. There are several perceived advantages of using such a data source. Firstly, job advertisements are artifacts that provide significant insights about the organization, labor market, and industry (Robinson, Arcodia, Tian, & Charlton, 2010). Secondly, job advertisements are a readily accessible source (Harper, 2012) that allow the collection of large amounts of data in a seamless and efficient manner. Thirdly, job advertisement data facilitates opportunities to analyze over time (Brooks, Greer, & Morris, 2018), and to track specific changes in skills and attributes requested (Pejic-Bach, Bertonecel, Meško, & Krstić, 2019). This is a pertinent discussion in various fields of work given the constant evolution of jobs as a result of trends such as fast-changing technologies. Lastly, examination of job advertisements can assist curriculum designers in determining the gaps between the skills requested by employers and those explicitly or implicitly taught in an educational program (Brooks et al., 2018). This is of benefit to universities, as students tend to choose programs with higher perceived employment prospects (Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005).

Despite the potential of analyzing job advertisements, and notwithstanding some studies using such data in broad areas of employment (e.g., Brooks et al., 2018), its application in the context of event management has been rather limited. The small number of studies focusing on understanding skills and attributes required for event management (i.e., Arcodia, 2009; Arcodia & Barker, 2002; Beaven & Wright, 2006; Harris & Griffin, 1997; Harris & Jago, 1999; Junek, Lockstone, & Mair, 2009;

Perry, Foley, & Rumpf, 1996; Royal & Jago, 1998) is outdated and does not reflect the dynamic growth of the event sector and its labor needs (Meetings & Events Australia, 2019). Accordingly, several questions on the event management profession and its requirements remain unanswered.

Research Propositions in Event Management

Given current understandings of appropriate skills and attributes in event management, several specific research propositions are suggested to advance existing knowledge that can contribute to responding more appropriately to employer needs and further professionalizing the industry.

Proposition 1: Create a Shared Terminology for Event Management Positions

Existing studies analyzing job advertisements have revealed a panoply of event management-related positions (Arcodia, 2009; Arcodia & Robb, 2000). These terms often overlap and there seems to be little understanding of their differences, thus hindering efforts to examine skills and attributes across the various positions. Both academia and the industry would benefit from a terminology that encapsulates the variety of event management positions and their differences. A detailed analysis of job advertisements would enable the creation of such terminology based on several variables available in advertisements including the key words, experience required, salary, skills and attributes required, and responsibilities. In addition, there needs to be some investigation that considers the skills that distinguish the various event management positions, which can be beneficial for future recruiters and recruits alike. This would offer the industry access to a shared vocabulary regarding duties and responsibilities, but also pave the way for more detailed investigations. As Silvers, Bowdin, O'Toole, and Nelson (2005) suggested, the profession is still evolving because of the lack of government licensing and little industry certification. In addition, the *Event Management Body of Knowledge, EMBOK* (Silvers, 2003) produced an interesting three-dimensional model of fundamental knowledge and skills.

Proposition 2: Investigate Whether Formal Education Meets the Expressed Requirements of the Industry

Despite the initial efforts in categorizing skills and attributes required in event management, existing literature has not yet investigated the extent to which available event management programs are teaching and fostering the development of the required skill set. This would be a pertinent investigation enabling the identification of potential gaps between the needs of the industry and formal education, and potentially guiding curriculum reviews (Wise, Henninger, & Kennan, 2011). One professional association (Krugman, Cecil, & Fenich, 2014) has produced some competency standards specifically focused on business events, but the guide is subsector and association specific with limited industry-wide application. Such an audit and evaluation against the expressed needs of the industry would be particularly important given that event management education is considered essential in underpinning its professionalization (Arcodia & Reid, 2005).

Proposition 3: Investigate if and how Skills and Attributes in Event Management Have Changed Over the Years

Given the outdated literature on job advertisement analysis, there is little understanding of how skills and attributes in event management have changed. Such studies could also investigate the consistency of skills required for the various event management positions, which has been deemed important in other fields (Brooks et al., 2018). These investigations could also help predict further changes in the requirements of the profession (Baum, 2015). In addition, understanding these changes is important in appreciating motivational factors in labor recruitment, especially the needs of newcomers to the industry such as Generation Y and Z workers.

Proposition 4: Investigate Advancements in Machine Learning and Text Analytics and Their Application to Event Management Research

Although previous studies seem methodologically and analytically sound, they are invariably

based on small samples; consequently, generalizability becomes less convincing. In addition, most studies are analytically rudimentary, offering frequency and cross tabulations, used to create a list of attributes and skills. These listings are advantageous for a foundational understanding of the sector; however, their implications for advancement of knowledge of the profession are limited. With the emergence of online advertisements and the superior analytical opportunities afforded by interrogating online data, it seems reasonably apparent that there should be more discussion based on larger data sets that offer a fuller and broader account. Furthermore, these advancements have provided new possibilities for collecting and analyzing this rich data source (Alaei, Becken, & Stantic, 2019) by replacing the traditional manual coding that has dominated job advertisement analysis (Harper, 2012) and employing text mining, which offers more efficient ways of data analysis (Pejic-Bach et al., 2019).

Conclusions

The clear conclusion is that literature on event management skills and attributes is scant, existing discussions are dated, and consequently the event management field has not benefitted from robust analysis and discussion. In addition, information gleaned from online advertisements is underused, but can provide useful data, and the industry will develop much more slowly without event management education and training being promoted and supported as a key pillar of professionalization.

This article suggests a full investigation into the appropriate skills and attributes needed to engage in event management. This is important so that educational providers have confidence in their programs; event management aspirants have trust in the appositeness of the education and training available; and the industry is assured that the skills taught and the attributes encouraged are used as a platform for increased professionalization. The discussion suggests that powerful insights can be achieved by a sophisticated investigation of job advertisements.

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