



## **Risk Management: Event Managers' Attitudes, Beliefs and Perceived Constraints**

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## **RISK MANAGEMENT: EVENT MANAGERS' ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS**

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Events draw large crowds of people together within defined spaces and as such have the potential to have significant impacts. Occupational health and safety requirements, legal duty of care, and the capacity of organizations to deal with risks and crisis are important considerations for the sustainability of event organizations and events themselves. To date there has been a paucity of research analyzing the adoption and implementation of event risk management by event organizers, and in particular the influence that managerial attitudes and beliefs may have on the implementation of risk planning behavior. This article aims to identify event managers' attitude and beliefs concerning risk management as well as explore social influencers and perceived constraints to implementing risk management planning. The research adopts a qualitative methodology to address the research aim and uses Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB) as a framework for exploring event managers' risk, attitudes, beliefs, and perceived constraints. Semistructured interviews with 11 event managers were undertaken, drawn from South East Queensland, Australia. Respondents had positive event risk planning attitudes, which were influenced by beliefs relating to safety, compliance, decision making, and professionalism. However, seven perceived constraints were also identified as important in influencing risk planning in an event context. The findings suggest event managers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceived constraints vary considerably based on previous experience, size of event organization, and level of professionalism. The article discusses these findings and recommends future research to inform more sustainable event practices in the future.

Key words: Risk management; Planning; Events, Theory of planned behavior

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### Introduction

The growth of the events sector, both domestically and internationally, has contributed significantly towards marketing and development of tour-

ism as well as the social atmosphere of a destination (Abbott & Geddie, 2001; Getz, 1997, 2008; Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005; Reid, 2007). Events incorporate a range of activities and resources that expose considerable potential for risk and crises (Elbe,

2009; Roche, 1994; Tassiopoulos, 2005), including their size, scope, and their ability to attract visitors who may lack familiarity with the hazards in the local area. Risk management planning assists event organizers in devising and conducting events in the safest possible manner, while mitigating losses (Berlonghi, 1990). Therefore, it is essential that event organizations plan for and develop strategies to deal with the possible consequences of unplanned events.

There has been a paucity of research analyzing event risk management planning attitudes, beliefs, and factors inhibiting or facilitating adoption levels. The majority of research in the area has focused on mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, a significant yet small subsector of the events sector (S. Boo & Gu, 2010; Chang & Singh, 1990; Toohey & Taylor, 2008). The events sector is diverse incorporating a number of different event stakeholders and host organizations (including accommodation providers, government agencies, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations such as sporting and cultural groups, etc.), as well as industry sectors (including venues, construction, staging, accommodation, entertainment, transport, tours, retail, and food/beverages).

As Robbins, Judge, Millett, and Waters-Marsh (2008) note, organizational behavior can be explored at a systems, group, or individual level. Although organizations ultimately implement risk planning activities, it is the role of individuals and their psychological factors (personality, attitudes, values, beliefs, motivations) which may influence the adoption of risk planning activities. In a related context, hotel managers' perceptions and attitudes have been found to play an important role in preparing for and responding to such incidents (Drabek, 2000; Hystad & Keller, 2008; Rousaki & Alcott, 2007). Barriers or impediments to risk planning have also been discovered from related research, including perceived lack of money, lack of knowledge/expertise, and lack of responsibility for dealing with natural hazard risks (Hystad & Keller, 2008). Rhodes and Reinholdt (1999) suggest a complex range of factors may influence risk planning including experience, values and beliefs, messages, personal attributes, and sociocultural norms. Other factors may also influence risk planning by event organizations at a systems or group level in-

cluding organizational size, type, culture, structure, resources, leadership, and communication but are not explored in this article.

The aim of this exploratory research is to identify event managers' risk management planning beliefs, attitudes, and constraints (including crisis planning) utilizing the theory of planned behavior as an underpinning framework. Specific research objectives of this research were to:

1. Identify salient event risk and crisis management attitudes and beliefs among event managers;
2. Analyze social reference groups influencing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of event managers to risk management planning;
3. Examine constraints to event managers' implementation of risk management planning.

Understanding of event managers' beliefs and behaviors will identify individual risk management attitudes and sector norms. Individuals are strongly influenced by social reference groups, such as peers, colleagues, and stakeholders. Therefore, it is essential to analyze these influencing relationships for policy and sector professionalization practices. Additionally, constraints to implementation and operationalizing risk management practices will facilitate the development of managerial strategies for effective implementation. A notable model in the sociopsychological field is the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which provides an analytical framework for understanding managers' individual beliefs, attitudes, and constraints that may influence organizational implementation of risk planning.

Event managers were sampled from a range of events in South East Queensland, Australia, and at differing levels of professionalization to identify variance in attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Specifically, while insurance and legislative practices govern factors in organizing and planning events the affect or influence of individual attitudes, beliefs, and practices have towards risk management require investigation. The article begins with a literature review related to events and risk management and the theory used to underpin the research (the theory of planned behavior) before outlining the methodology employed. The results are then presented and conclusions and recommendations for future practice and research are made.

## Literature Review

### *Events and Risk Management*

The Australian and New Zealand International Standards (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009, p. 9) defines risk as an “effect of uncertainty on objectives,” which could affect differing aspects (financial, social, environmental, health, and safety), to varying levels (strategic, organization, or project) and likelihoods. Risk, in the event context, is defined as “any condition or occurrence that might affect the outcome of an event or event activities, and might expose an event organization to loss measured in terms of probability and consequences” (Silvers, 2008, p. 4). Risk management should be an integral element of sustainable management practice, to minimize the potential for physical, social, emotional, or financial loss arising from participation in an activity in an unfamiliar environment with unknown outcomes (Ewart & Boone, 1987). Leopkey and Parent (2009) further noted that risk management is “a process that involves assessing all possible risks to the event and its stakeholders and then strategically avoiding, preventing, reducing, diffusing, reallocating, legalizing, or using relationship management to mitigate the identified risks” (p. 164). Hence, the ultimate aim is to prevent the risk from turning into a crisis.

Effective risk management requires a systematic approach to control the range and impact of potential losses. The Australian and New Zealand International Standards (2009) (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009) suggest risk management is a logical and systematic method of establishing the context, identifying, analyzing, evaluating, treating, monitoring, and communicating risks associated with any activity or function. Event managers need an understanding of the type of event, management structure and resources, organizational culture, and stakeholder involvement, to provide insight into event risk exposure (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Berlonghi, 1990). Comprehensively identifying risks should be a systematic process involving management and stakeholder input. Silvers (2008) acknowledged that different events are exposed to different risk factors and the severity of risks will vary in different contexts. Therefore it is vital for event organizers to develop a culture of risk awareness and preparedness, to be better positioned to

anticipate and manage risks, thereby rebounding quickly from any crisis situations. Following identification, risks require evaluation to determine acceptable risks and those requiring mitigation strategies and plans. Risk management is an iterative and dynamic process that should be continually monitored, reviewed, and communicated to stakeholders to ensure preparedness.

Extensive identification of event risks has been outlined in the literature. These risks range from security and safety (H. C. Boo, Ghiselli, & Almanza, 2000; Cieslak, 2009; Taylor & Toohey, 2006), health risks (Ahmed & Memish, 2008; Memish & Ahmed, 2002; Shafi, Booy, Haworth, Rashid, & Memish, 2008), stakeholder relationships (Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2007; Leopkey & Parent, 2009; Mules, 2004; O’Brien & Gardiner, 2006), climate change (Jones, Scott, & Khaled, 2006), crowding (Abbott & Geddie, 2001; Berlonghi, 1995; Lee & Graefe, 2003; Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005), insurance crisis (Arcodia & McKinnon, 2004), and lack of organizational planning (Bramwell, 1997; Getz, 1997). However, there has been a paucity of research examining the attitudes, beliefs, influences, and constraints on event managers in planning for or implementing risk management practices. A focus on the individual level psychological factors and their potential influence on risk planning have been outlined previously as important and lacking in an event context. The next section outlines a psychological theory which can be applied to better understand these issues at an individual level.

### *Theory of Planned Behavior*

A notable model in the sociopsychological field, namely the theory of planned behavior (TPB), is not only useful to help understand attitudes toward risk planning by event managers, but also helps to identify the possible determinants of behavior. A review of 185 independent studies published up to the end of 1997 by Armitage and Conner (2001) found that the TPB accounted for 27% and 39% of the variance in behavior and intention. Developed by Ajzen in 1985, the TPB is today perhaps the most popular sociopsychological model for the understanding and prediction of behavior. It can be presented as follows: Behavioral intention = attitudes + subjective norms + perceived behavioral con-

tol. As an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the TPB was proposed to address the possibility of incomplete volitional control by incorporating the additional construct of perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991, 2005). It is apparent that the TPB may be appropriate for use in researching risk planning because various nonvolitional factors are included in a risk context. In the events sector, a range of nonvolitional factors may also diminish the ability/opportunity of event managers to undertake risk planning (behavior). Therefore, TPB provides a model with a well-defined structure to help examine the reasons for risk planning behavior.

According to the TPB, behavioral intentions are predicted by three basic determinants: one personal in nature, one reflecting social influence, and a third dealing with issues of control. Each factor is in turn generated by a number of beliefs and evaluations (Huh, Kim, & Law, 2009). The personal factor is the individual's *attitude toward the behavior*, which is the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the particular behavior of interest (Ajzen, 2005). In the event context, a manager's evaluation of the significance of risk planning (RP) affects their intention. Positive evaluations strengthen intentions, while negative evaluations weaken them. It can be expected that event managers' positive attitudes toward RP behavior would strengthen their intentions to perform RP behavior. Therefore, an event manager's attitude toward RP behavior is employed as the first psychological factor influencing RP behavior and needs to be explored. This factor is also influenced indirectly by their behavioral beliefs.

The second determinant of intention is a person's perception of social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior under consideration. Since it deals with perceived normative prescriptions, this factor is termed *subjective norm* (Ajzen, 2005). Subjective norm is the perceived opinions of significant others who are close/important to an individual and who influence his/her decision making (e.g., relatives, close friends, coworkers/colleagues, or business partners). In other words, it concerns the probability of whether significant referents would approve or disapprove of the behavior. In the event context, managers' decision making might be influenced by a reference group including staff or

volunteers, clients, sponsors, participants, spectators, government bodies, and even pressure groups who could express their opinions on risk planning. Organizational behavior theory states that the use of norms to guide behavior is connected with effective control (McKenna, 2006). Norms also reflect the culture, suggesting some cultures with a more collective tradition may place greater emphasis on the group and on conformity with norms than might cultures with a more individualistic orientation (Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2005). In addition, according to the TPB, the perceived opinions of reference groups will influence intentions. If a subjective norm is favorable (e.g., the perceived stakeholders' preferences about undertaking RP are favorable), the intention to engage in the behavior is higher (e.g., event managers' intention to perform RP is higher). Subject norm is thus employed as the second psychological factor influencing RP behavior and needs further exploration in this research. This factor is also indirectly influenced by normative beliefs.

The third determinant of intention is the ability to perform the behavior of interest, termed *perceived behavioral control* (Ajzen, 2005). This is the major difference between the TRA and the TPB models (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010). Perceived behavioral control assesses the perception of how well one can control factors that may facilitate/constrain the actions needed to deal with a specific situation. In the event context, managers' intentions are positively influenced by their self-confidence in their ability to perform a behavior. When event managers have little control over RP behavior because of the unavailability of required resources, their behavioral intention will be lower in spite of the fact that they have positive attitudes and/or subjective norms. Resources can be human resources, such as a risk management consultants, available funding resources, and physical resources, such as required facilities or tools. It can be expected that the availability of required resources for RP would affect event managers' intentions to undertake RP behavior. Perceived behavioral control is therefore employed as the third psychological factor influencing RP behavior which is explored in this article. This factor is also indirectly influenced by control beliefs (Fig. 1).

In summary, people intend to perform behavior

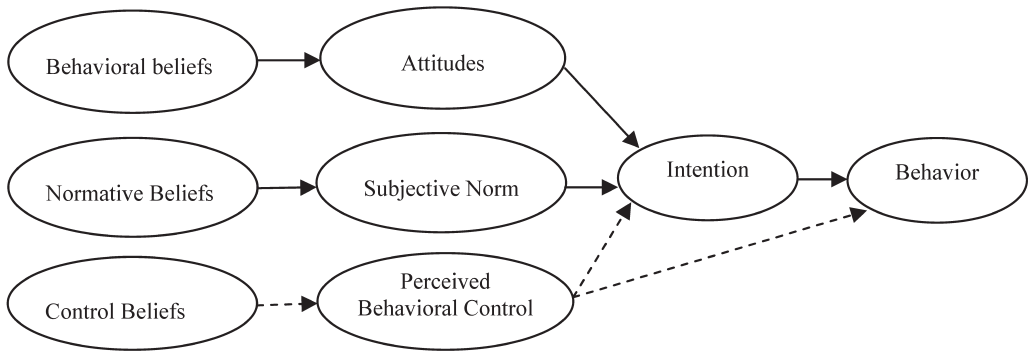


Figure 1. The theory of planned behavior model. Source: Lam and Hsu (2004).

when they evaluate it positively, when they experience social pressure to perform it, and when they believe that they have the means and opportunity to do so. In the event risk planning setting, it is expected that event managers are more willing to undertake risk planning if they have a positive attitude towards it, want to comply with other important people's (e.g., stakeholder) opinions, and have requisite skills, knowledge, resources, and experiences in practice.

The TPB has been used to examine consumer attitudes and behavior in tourism (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2005; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Sparks, 2007; Sparks & Pan, 2009), as well as managers' safety attitudes, intentions, and behavior (Rundmo & Hale, 2003). In their study of 210 managers, Rundmo and Hale (2003) discovered that eight attitudinal dimensions explained approximately 40% of the variance in behavior. In particular, high management commitment, low fatalism, high safety priority, and high risk awareness seemed to be particularly important attitudes. However, this study was limited in that it did not use qualitative research to elicit attitudinal items, did not examine other parts of the TPB (social norms and perceived behavioral control). Nor did it examine the role of indirect beliefs.

Although studies exist in a tourism and safety context, none to the authors' knowledge have been conducted to explore event managers' risk attitudes, beliefs, and constraints. The TPB could provide a strong base to investigate, understand, or possibly predict risk planning behavior in a holistic and systematic way, which has been found to be lacking in previous studies. Based on this discussion, this article will next outline the research method em-

ployed to examine event managers' risk planning attitudes, beliefs, and perceived constraints.

### Methodology

The research is underpinned by a constructivism approach that purposes scientific knowledge is a human creation made available with material and cultural resources (Bloor, 1976; Golinski, 1998). Constructivism is based upon a relativist belief that there are multiple socially constructed truths and realities, with no rational basis for judging one perspective better than another (Fay, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Research adopting this approach builds and generates theory about phenomenon through participants own words, allowing respondents to express their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors with the absence of preconceived notions (Golinski, 1998; Jennings, 2001). The research also utilizes Ajzen's (1991, 2005) TPB as a framework for exploring event managers' risk attitude, beliefs, and constraints to implementing risk planning behavior. However, the lack of research and understanding of event managers' attitudes and beliefs to risk management necessitate that the theory inductively emerge, from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomena, as it is systematically collected and coded (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Fay, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Golinski, 1998; Jennings, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Therefore, qualitative in-depth interviews with event managers in the South East Queensland region of Australia were utilized.

To obtain a comprehensive sample a matrix of events in the region, that are diverse across the



area, by theme, size, organization structure, and length of operation was developed. The matrix incorporated all events from Brisbane, Gold Coast, and the Scenic Rim regions which had been advertised on local council, as well as Tourism Queensland and Queensland Events websites and event calendars. In total, 51 events were identified for the three council regions. Every second event was selected for each of the regions and the sample further refined to ensure representation based on the following criteria; size of event (large, medium, and small sized), theme of event (music, sport, cultural, community), and organizational structure (professional, voluntary organizing committee). Event managers for each of the remaining 17 events were contacted by phone and/or email and invited to participate in a 30-minute interview at a time and place of convenience. Semistructured interviews with 11 event managers who agreed to participate in the study were conducted. Characteristics of the respondents, evidenced in Table 1, indicate that all three regions were represented with events ranging from small community events through to large international sporting events. However, the Scenic Rim had the smallest representation with only three event managers participating, reflecting the rural nature and smaller number of events within this region. There was overlap with some event managers discussing their role in multiple events throughout the regions.

The semistructured interview schedule was derived from the review of the theory of planned be-

havior and event risk management literature. First, respondents were provided with the Australian and New Zealand International Standards (2009) definition of risk and risk management to help guide the interview. Second, respondents were asked to discuss their attitudes to risk planning and an exploration of underlying beliefs relating to perceived advantages and disadvantages of risk planning. Third, respondents were asked about individuals or groups that influenced their risk planning behaviors, to determine social reference groups and social norms. Fourth, respondents discussed key constraints or facilitators to risk planning to explore their perceived behavioral control in implementing risk management practices. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and returned to respondents for member cross-checking.

Qualitative in-depth interviews provide a richness of data that builds theory through three levels of coding (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Neuman, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Firstly, open coding of the interview transcripts ensured that the data was labeled, analyzed, compared, and categorized. Secondly, an axial coding process sought to identify relationships between the categories and subcategories. Thirdly, the analysis underwent a selective coding process to identify core themes and their relationship to the categories. Throughout, and as a consequence of this research approach, there was constant comparison between emerging categories and consequent respondents for trustworthiness and theoretical saturation (De-

Table 1  
Characteristics of Respondent Profiles

Region	Theme	Event Size	Organizational Structure
Brisbane	cultural	small	Voluntary organization/consular
Gold Coast	community	small	Voluntary organizing committee
Scenic Rim	heritage	medium	Voluntary organizing committee
Scenic Rim	cultural	medium	Voluntary organising committee/council
Gold Coast	sport	medium	Sporting organization
Brisbane/Gold Coast & Scenic Rim	community	medium	Professional organization
Gold Coast	agricultural	large	Professional organization
Brisbane	sport	large	Professional organization
Brisbane	music	large	Professional organization
Brisbane/Gold Coast	community	large	Professional organization
Brisbane/Gold Coast	music	large	Professional organization

"Small" represents events with <2,000 attendees/participants' "medium" includes events between 2,000 and 9,999 attendees; "large" is events with >10,000 attendees.

crop, 2004). Theoretical saturation is the point at which “no additional data are being found whereby the (researcher) can develop properties of the category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 65). Guides to sample size vary dramatically; however, Romney, Weller, and Batchelder (1986) found that small samples can be quite sufficient in providing complete and accurate information within a particular context, dependent upon participants having expertise in the phenomena being examined. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) research examining theoretical saturation found “where the aim is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, twelve interviews should suffice” (p. 79). Lawton and Weaver’s (2009) research successfully utilized 19 in-depth interviews in determining strategic positioning of conventional travel agents in the US. Their research identified that theoretical saturation was reached after 14 in-depth interviews (Lawton & Weaver, 2009; Weaver & Lawton, 2008). Interestingly, theoretical saturation for this research was reached after nine interviews with the remaining interviews being undertaken to enrich patterns and data sources.

### Findings

Respondents understanding of risk and risk management varied from limited and generalized to a comprehensive in-depth knowledge. At one end of the continuum one respondent states “I have no idea [of what risk management means]. I mean to say, you risk your life in a car every time you go driving—that’s a risk” [I2]. However, other respondents articulated that risk management entailed “identifying before the event and trying to put measures in place to make sure that you minimize any potential risk or fall out” [I4]. Safety and physical risks were discussed by most respondents as the key risk factors to consider; however, a respondent went on to note “also the financial risk and a multitude of other risk factors need to be taken into risk management” [I10]. There appeared a direct connection between the level of professionalism of the event organizational structure (i.e., voluntary or professional) and a respondent’s depth of understanding.

Analysis of the data identified nearly all respon-

dents had positive attitudes towards risk management planning. One respondent enthused “I’m one of these ones that’s all for it; let’s bring it on; let’s be doing it” [I10]. There was some differentiation between respondents based on past experience. “I think first of all, we are all very much aware of the concept of a risk management planning. We are conscious of it, we are developing policies and practices . . . that will mean it’s a lot easier, for us and therefore more enjoyable” [I4]. The findings indicate that not all event managers had positive attitudes to risk management; two event managers’ indicated that the risk did not belong to them but to others. A respondent stated “you don’t really need a plan, because if you just open your eyes just that little bit you can see what the risk is” [I2]. Differentiation in behavioral attitudes needs further investigation due to the subjective nature of this construct; however relationships between the size of an event, nature of event organization, and the professional background of individuals appeared to influence attitude.

Probed further, four themes emerged to explain respondents’ beliefs that indirectly influence the attitudes demonstrated. Event managers identified that there was a need to reduce risks to ensure safety, compliance, aiding the decision making processes, and professionalism. Safety of staff, contractors, participants, and attendees were important considerations for most event managers. The most common risk identified by respondents related to safety of employees, volunteers, participants, and attendees, particularly as a consequence of activities and planned programming. One respondent stated “it’s a priority for us to ensure that anybody that comes to this place, during and leading up to the event and after the event, while we have control of the grounds deserves to be here and not be exposed to any undue risk” [I7]. Compliance considerations, such as legislation and insurance requirements, have also influenced event manager’s attitudes and behaviors. One respondent acknowledged:

I haven’t seen the main advantage [of planning for risk] but one day when it happens, when the disaster happens and we’re ready for it, that will be the most important thing. The worst kind of PR is negative PR, it stays with people forever. You’re doing yourself out of business if you haven’t covered yourself. [I9]



Increasing professionalism expectations has influenced event managers' risk planning beliefs and attitudes. One respondent stated "Staff are actually interested in risk management and the whole Occupational Health and Safety subject per se, because it seems to give them a little bit more of a professionalism" [I10]. As a consequence, personal attitudes towards and importance of risk management planning has undergone significant growth.

Subjective norms were influenced by a range of reference groups. Internally, respondents identified organizational management, such as directors, section heads, or event organizing committees, as well as staff and volunteers. One respondent commented "The senior management team's actually very supportive of the risk management, they're actually the ones that are pushing it . . . he sees it as a priority for the business as a whole. So the senior management team takes it very seriously and they very much are seen as a priority" [I5]. Another respondent discussed the importance of fellow organizing committee member roles by stating that "the head of the Department of Workplace Health and Safety here on the Gold Coast, through the State Government people [was on the committee], he was always aware that we were trying to ensure that everybody who came here was—left here the same way as they arrived" [I7]. Additionally, respondents perceived that staff, volunteers, and contractors expected event managers respond to and implement risk management strategies.

Externally, event managers were also influenced by the attitudes and normative beliefs of clients, sponsors, venues, participants, and attendees. A respondent stated "Try doing a job for Telstra [a national listed telecommunications organization] without having a risk management plan in place; it won't happen, they also drive through if they're using a third party event management company, they'll drive it through to them" [I10]. Significant compliance facilitators such as government organizations, police, security, and event insurers were also important in influencing the risk management practices of respondents. As one respondent stated:

There is principle in place that says everybody along the way needs to make sure they are covered. Whatever the regulations and rules are, for any venue that we might be in, or any event that

we might be in, that participants respect all their drills, electricians to certify their cabling. All these stuff they need to do it, before we participate. We will literally walk out of an event if they didn't, because it is just not worth it. [I8]

However, social norms will only influence an individual if they consider risk to be an important element of the event planning process. A respondent noted that "when you have got old-school people, who will think 'we can get away with that for another year'" [I6] that will impact upon the adoption and implementation of risk management planning.

The event sector is diverse drawing expertise from a range of industries, such as construction, entertainment, lighting, and technical specialists to identify a few. At the forefront, the importance of risk management and planning has been driven by larger, professional event organizations due to their contracts with government and corporate clients. As one respondent noted "it's the event management industry coming into the 20th century" [I4] enhancing the professionalism of the industry. Event associations, such as International Special Events Society (ISES), have also assisted in professional development and education. One respondent stated that ISES "always come and speak once a year to inform people...has an education plan to educate people within the events industry in Queensland" [I9]. While many event managers believe that risk management is important and social reference groups such as event stakeholders support this, a challenge for the industry is developing sector norms that support widespread adoption of risk management plans and practices.

Seven factors were identified as perceived behavioral control elements impacting upon respondents' ability to implement risk management plans for events. Behavioral control factors included; time, financial costs, human resourcing, knowledge/self-efficacy, adapting to change, restrictions, and regulation. Time, financial costs, knowledge/self-efficacy, and human resourcing capacity were discussed as significant issues confronting event managers in South-East Queensland. Respondents perceived that systematic risk management identification, evaluation, and planning results in additional time burdens for event organizations. As one respondent commented "see, I still run a business

so I can't give it 100%" [12]. Consequently, a number of respondents identified hiring external consultants to assist in this process. Time and consultant costs result in financial costs being incurred by event organizations. However, as one respondent stated:

I've got private health insurance. I find it the same kind of thing. Like, what's more important? The fact that it costs a lot of money but it's your life. My business is my bread and butter. One incident could put me out of business for the rest of my life too and I wouldn't be employable again. [19]

A number of respondents discussed the low barriers to entry to the event sector, which has resulted in the growth of "one-man band" operations. Smaller operators or less experienced individuals, as well as voluntary organizations, have greater constraints from human resourcing, time, and knowledge to address risk management. As one respondent commented "I don't believe that the independent contractors, your one-man bands, even address it or think about it. I've seen a few other people, how they work, and I just think it doesn't come under their radar as being important" [19].

The findings indicate a resistance to change among some event managers to adopt and implement risk planning practices was evident in the sector. One respondent illustrated this, stating "it really is quite hard to push through sometimes. They go, 'We've done this in the past all the time,' and we go, 'That's great. That's how we are going to do it from now on, because of this and this.' There's a fair bit of resistance" [16]. Compounding this, perceptions abound that risk management planning added further administration burdens in the planning stages for event managers and organizations, particularly for smaller community and voluntary organizations planning events. It was perceived the added burdens could impede upon the willingness of individuals to become involved, as the administration of risk planning was viewed as boring or restriction of fun.

The final control factor influencing adoption and implementation of risk management planning relates to a lack of monitoring, regulation, or accountability of the events sector. Events incorporate a number of different industry sectors, therefore to adopt comprehensive risk management plans event

managers require knowledge of construction and building practices, electrical policies, occupational health and safety (OH&S) requirements, and crowd management to name a few. A respondent noted, "There have been different attempts to create industry bodies and regulate it, but I think one of the issues with event management, there's no real regulatory framework" [14]. This respondent went on to acknowledge "a lot of the government or regulatory decisions come from looking at issues in event management, which a lot of the time is from inexperienced event managers" [14]. Apart from site inspections and inductions there is a lack of regulation or monitoring of the events sector within Australia.

### Discussion

The findings from this exploratory research have provided an insight into the risk management attitudes, beliefs, influencers, and constraints of event managers in South-East Queensland region of Australia. Event managers are aware of and understand the importance of risk management. However, a number of issues have emerged from the findings.

Firstly, there are strong perceptions and positive attitudes towards risk management planning among event managers in South-East Queensland. The positive attitudes of individual event managers was identified as a contributing factor to their intentions to develop or implement risk planning practices supporting Ajzen's (2005) findings. Huh et al.'s (2009) proposition that attitudes were generated as a consequence of individual beliefs was also evident among event managers. Attitudes to risk management were derived from beliefs event managers had about safety, compliance, decision making, and professionalism. Interestingly, the research identified that event managers were largely concerned about physical and safety risks, followed by financial, weather, and organizational risks. These findings are in contrast to the holistic risk planning approach (financial, social, environmental, health, and safety) advocated by the Australian and New Zealand International Standards (AS/NZS ISO 31000, 2009). The findings indicate that individuals who are active event professionals within larger organizations appear to be driving risk management planning within the sector.

Secondly, event managers perceive a wide range of social reference group demands and requirements, as well as contractual and legal obligations, influence their risk planning behavior. The number of reference groups identified is larger than previous studies, which will improve the predictive ability of the social norm construct. This is advantageous as the social norm construct has been found to be weak in previous studies and in need of expansion (Armitage & Conner, 2001). The findings from this research suggest that event managers felt pressure to exhibit or plan for risk, aligning with organizational behavioral theorists (Ajzen, 2005; McKenna, 2006). However, event managers have a wider range of reference groups that they considered influential. The social pressure to perform risk planning practices was exerted internal and external of the event organization. The findings suggest that event managers may face increased complexity in planning and implementing effective risk management practices in their organizations compared to other sectors. Interestingly, social pressure from personal relationships was not discussed by respondents.

Thirdly, respondents perceived that significant barriers to implementation of risk planning practices and behaviors exist. Most commonly the growth of the sector has resulted in a proliferation of small operators that have little time, money, or impetus to focus on event risk planning strategies. More widely, the industry needs education to enhance the knowledge of practitioners as currently expertise is sought externally of many organizations. The use of external consultants and the time involved in establishing risk management plans, policies, and strategies is a limiting factor for widespread implementation of risk management practices beyond simply the need for legal compliance and internal risks.

### Conclusion

This article makes an important contribution to developing knowledge and understanding the individual level factors that may influence the adoption of risk planning in the events context. More specifically this research examined individual psychological factors including the personal attitudes, beliefs, influences, and constraints of event managers

across a range of diverse events. Many event managers are aware of and understand the importance of risk management, although most focused on safety and physical risks at the expense of other risks (such as social and environmental). Event risk assessment and analysis processes need to be holistic due to broadening of the range and scope of risk emulating from and consequences of events. Event managers benefit from the adoption of holistic risk management approach, due to: meeting moral and professional responsibilities toward triple bottom line sustainability and accountability to the wider community, inclusion of the risks associated with a variety of significant issues (social, economic, environmental), and increased stakeholder expectations. However, managers face certain constraints to implementing risk planning activities including time, financial costs, human resourcing, knowledge/self-efficacy, adapting to change, restrictions, and regulation. These findings concur with the literature on tourism crisis and disaster planning discussed earlier in the paper (see Hystad & Keller, 2008, for instance), and may be due to the size and structure of the event sector comprising many small operators across a number of different industry sectors.

The research findings provide some practical recommendations. Professional associations, government organizations and tertiary institutions have a significant role to play in educating and assisting the development of event manager competence to understand and plan for a wide range of risks. The use of knowledge management tools to aid in the development of industry manuals, risk assessments, and policy guidelines would assist practitioners limited by knowledge, time, and available staff, factors uncovered in this research. Creating opportunities to share experiences and knowledge gained would also be beneficial for event managers. Professional event associations could assist through the provision of online portals or discussion groups. A key challenge will be facilitating these opportunities as intellectual property rights abound for event managers that have invested and are actively involved in risk management planning processes. Furthermore, event managers consider this their competitive advantage. Sustainability of event practitioners businesses, and the wider event sector, will be threatened should widespread adoption

of risk management planning practices not be implemented.

Theoretically, this research has been exploratory in nature to ascertain risk attitudes, beliefs, and perceived constraints of event managers in South-East Queensland, Australia through applying the theory of planned behavior. The research has identified key themes and characteristics which will inform theoretical understanding within the events literature. However, limitations exist as the research design is exploratory in nature and focuses upon one region of Queensland in Australia, and at an individual level only. Further research is required on the national attitudes and beliefs of event practitioners. The findings from this study provide a strong basis for developing a quantitative survey of the risk planning attitudes, influences, and practices of event managers. Key themes elicited from this study could be developed into a quantitative survey to examine not only the level of risk planning behavior employed by event managers, but the key influencing factors, perhaps including experience and levels of professionalism. This could help predict the major influencers of risk planning behavior and help to target training and education to improve the adoption of risk planning in the future. Further, based on the results of this research, the integration of group or system level factors such as organizational size, type, culture, structure, resources, leadership, and communication could be explored. As this study found that responses appeared to differ by organizational type and size, this could be important aspects to examine in greater detail in future research.

After a period of rapid growth within Australia the event sector requires consolidation and enhanced levels of professionalism. Risk management needs to be considered as a core competency for event managers. Clearly, the strategic planning and management of risks are important for the future sustainability of individual events as well as the broader event sector. Event managers' attitudes and underlying beliefs may continue to affect managers' intentions and ability to develop risk management planning practices. The TPB provides a solid framework to investigate, analyze and possibly predict risk planning behavior in a holistic and systematic way, although future research should also focus on the group and system level factors, not addressed in this article.

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