

**Research Directions in Business Events: An Evaluation of
Literature Reviews 1996–2019**

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Part 1

The World of Business Events

1 Research Directions in Business Events: An Evaluation of Literature Reviews 1996–2019

 Truc H. Le

Abstract

Business events are considered a valuable component for driving revenue and an important area for event research; however, it has not emerged as a separate field in recent syntheses of event management research. This chapter provides an evaluation of existing reviews discussing business events during the period of 1996–2019 in

order to highlight research gaps in the field. Following this, a snapshot of recent literature in business events from 2017 to 2020 is presented to offer some critical implications for business event researchers and organisers. This chapter reveals that the progress related to business events has not been strongly emphasised in the extant literature. The research gaps related to business events literature were rather dispersed and diluted among other dominant types of planned events. Future reviews in event-related research are encouraged to move beyond mere tourism, hospitality and events journals to achieve an inter-disciplinary approach to business events research. It is also

useful for event practitioners to familiarise themselves with recent research trends and innovations in business events to be able to adapt rapidly to new environments in a post pandemic world.

Introduction

The business event sector significantly impacts the economies of destinations and multiple aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry (Cecil, Fenich, Krugman, & Hashimoto, 2013; Foley, Schlenker, Edwards, & Lewis-Smith, 2013; Getz & Page, 2016). As a term, “business events” has been increasingly used by academics and industry to denote MICE activities

(meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions; Mair, 2012; Foley et al., 2013). Although this is a complex and diverse sector, the tourism value of business events has achieved increasing recognition given that it is one that now strengthens tourist visitation to many destinations (Arcodia & Robb, 2000; Mair & Jago, 2010; Foley et al., 2013; Getz & Page, 2016).

Research into business events was at an early stage and in the 1990s was considered “virtually non-existent” (Witt, Sykes, & Dartus, 1995, p. 275) and “a largely neglected area of tourism research” (Opperman, 1996, p. 11). In a literature review conducted by Mair (2012) in the period from 2000 to 2009, the author asserted that after 15 years from the outset, there had still been a lack of literature to

guide business events research (Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oh, Kim, & Hong, 2009). This may be because studies in this field were still dispersed and dynamic, and research strengths and gaps were not rigorously identified which could underpin and direct future research. Recognising this need, a handful of reviews of business events research have been conducted to identify research trends and gaps in the field, especially between 1996 and 2012 (Carlsen, 1996; Lee & Back, 2005; Yoo & Weber, 2005; Mair, 2012).

Although business events are considered a valuable component for driving revenue to organisations and an important area for event research (Draper, Young Thomas, & Fenich, 2018) as well as a separate type of

event in event typologies (Getz, 2008; Kim, Boo, & Kim, 2013; Getz & Page, 2016), this sector has not emerged as a separate field in recent syntheses of event research.

After the literature review conducted by Mair (2012), all reviews have targeted event management and event tourism research as a whole and only incorporated the business events component in their findings (i.e. Kim et al., 2013; Getz & Page, 2016; Draper, Young Thomas, & Fenich, 2018; Kim & Kaewnuch, 2018). As a result, the progress specifically related to contemporary business events has not been emphasised in such studies, nor have the present gaps in business events research. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to provide an evaluation of existing reviews targeting/including business events from

the first review (i.e. Carlsen, 1996) to the most up-to-date (i.e. Wang & Xia, 2019) to highlight research gaps in the field. The chapter also presents a snapshot of recent literature in business events (2017–2020) which will offer some critical implications for business event researchers and organisers.

Existing Reviews of Literature in Business Events

According to Grant and Booth (2009), there have been subtle variations in the degree of process and rigour within the diverse review types. Such variations are most clearly evidenced in the structures and methodologies that distinguish one review type from another. The final outcome of review papers may vary from identifying

emerging topics and priorities for future studies by indicating gaps in the literature (literature review in general), to critically evaluating the literature quality and subsequently lead to a resultant hypothesis or model (critical review) (Grant & Booth, 2009). This study utilises the typology of reviews and analyses proposed by Grant and Booth (2009) to illustrate review purpose and means embedded in the extant syntheses of business events, which in turn pinpoints current review trends and research gaps in the field.

A handful of research studies have reviewed business events research. Table 1.1 outlines a chronological summary of 14 literature reviews that included business events studies in their synthesis (starting with the very

first review in the field by Carlsen in 1996). The table summarises key features of each review including review context, review period, type of review/analysis (adapted from Grant & Booth, 2009), number of included articles and types of journals, focus of findings and business events-related finding/gap. Between 1996 and 2019, there were only eight out of 14 reviews focusing specifically on business events sector (Carlsen, 1996; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Lee & Back, 2005; Yoo & Weber, 2005; Elston & Draper, 2012; Mair, 2012; Sox et al., 2017; Wang & Xia, 2019) and five out of seven were published before 2013. It is worth noting that the two recent reviews in business events (Sox et al., 2017; Wang & Xia, 2019) focus specifically on a particular topic, which further suggests

the lack of attention to the knowledge synthesis in the business events sector, which can be because the sector is a subordinate of planned events, thus sharing a great deal of similarities put in the discussion with other event types such as sport and entertainment events, festivals and cultural celebrations (Getz & Page, 2016). This outdated and limited synthesis could also be attributed to the need for comprehensiveness and robustness when it comes to literature reviews (Grant & Booth, 2009), especially with the rise of systematisation in conducting literature reviews in business and social science research (Papaioannou et al., 2010; Moher et al., 2015; Rowley & Keegan, 2020).

Although research scope is the primary factor determining the searched field, the lack of stand-alone synthesis in the

business events sector may point to its downgrading significance in event management research.

<COMP: Place Table 1.1 Here>

The majority of reviews utilised thematic analysis to depict research trends and key themes while statistical analysis was used to depict journal fields, research context and research methods. Among them, Kim et al. (2013) and Park and Park (2017) took a step further to calculate intercoder reliability indices to ensure the credibility of the thematic coding. Specifically, Park and Park (2017) calculated Scott's pi (Scott, 1955), Cohen's kappa (Cohen, 1960) and Krippendorff's alpha (Krippendorff, 2004) in the full coding analysis of all collected articles and achieved high percentage agreement

between the two coders. In a similar instance, Mair (2012) acknowledged the importance of reporting intercoder reliability in thematic analysis yet the coding in Mair's (2012) study was carried out by the author, and therefore no intercoder bias can have occurred. Nevertheless, to reduce the subjective nature of the coding process where a single coder was used, this study employed an additional researcher to review the coding of some early articles to ensure a consistent approach. Of the 14 reviews, only three discussed intercoder reliability in their methodology. This once again highlights the significance of addressing intercoder bias in thematic/content analysis when a number of people participate in the coding process.

In terms of articles and fields of journals included in synthesis, the majority of existing reviews which stated outright article selection criteria solely utilised articles from events, tourism and hospitality journals (i.e. Lee & Back, 2005; Yoo & Weber, 2005; Kim et al., 2013; Park & Park, 2017; Draper, Young Thomas, & Fenich, 2018; Kim & Kaewnuch, 2018). The five exceptions that included research from other fields were Crouch and Ritchie (1998), Elston and Draper (2012), Mair (2012), Sox et al. (2017) and Wang and Xia (2019). The rationale for the exclusion of journals in other fields was not well warranted, and even not provided in some reviews. The key reasons for the exclusion were as follows: (1) the inclusion of only (highly ranked) journals in events,

tourism and hospitality ensures the quality of the synthesis (Yoo & Weber, 2005; Kim et al., 2013); and (2) the collection of articles from these fields allows for the comparison of research theme trends among these areas (Kim et al., 2013; Park & Park, 2017; Draper et al., 2018). Considering the multi-disciplinary nature of event industry on one hand (Draper et al., 2018), and the unprecedented growth of virtual and hybrid meetings (due to COVID-19) that leads to the convergence with other disciplines such as business, technology, geography and education on the other hand (Yung & Le, 2022), future synthesis should not exclude journals from other fields to ensure the comprehensiveness of the findings.

In terms of focus of findings, the 14 reviews provide literature synthesis in research themes (subject areas), key trends, research topics, research perspectives and research methods (either focusing on event (tourism) research in general or on the business event sector). There were four exceptions in which the focus was specifically on evaluating research into a specific topic including Crouch and Ritchie (1998) and Elston and Draper (2012), who examined convention and exhibition site selection criteria and process; Sox et al. (2017), who synthesised research in virtual and hybrid meetings, and Wang and Xia (2019), who identified key exhibition factors in the literature and proposed a human-exhibition interaction model. These reviews were conducted with the purpose of critically

evaluating the extant literature as well as developing a resultant theoretical framework, research gaps and propositions in the specific topic. These are of very few attempts including research outside the areas of events, tourism and hospitality (by journals) that are still highly relevant to the business events sector. As identified, the concentration of journal fields (in events, tourism and hospitality) in synthesising event research is a ‘norm’ in the extant reviews, and it has not been stressed as an emerging issue among event scholars.

The 14 syntheses have identified several major gaps related to business events that can be translated into different research directions, both for future business events synthesis and empirical research (see Table 1.1 for

the full list of research gaps). Generally, a meta-analysis review conducted by Kim and Kaewnuch (2018) reveals the minor scholarly attention on business events compared to sport events and general event research. In terms of research subjects, there is a need for evaluating economic, social and cultural impacts of convention tourism (Lee & Back, 2005) and social and environmental effects of business events, issues of climate change and incentive travel (Mair, 2012); more investigation is needed for private events (Kim et al., 2013), world's fairs, major international congresses (Getz & Page, 2016), and virtual and hybrid events (Sox et al., 2017; Draper et al., 2018); and more research should be put on special-purpose venues and their contribution to destination

competitiveness (Getz & Page, 2016). In terms of methodology, there has been an agenda for conducting qualitative research in meanings individuals attached to business events, for issues of gender, ethnicity and power relationships at work (Mair, 2012), and for conducting quantitative research and mixed-methods research in virtual and hybrid events (Sox et al., 2017). In terms of research trends, future reviews can examine research trends related to different types of events to provide an overview of the evolving nature of events (Park & Park, 2017; Draper et al., 2018), and to determine if there are any differences in the types of data collection methods and data analysis techniques (Draper et al., 2018).

A Snapshot of Recent Literature in Business Events (2017-2020)

This section provides a synopsis of studies conducted in the context of business events published between 2017 and 2020. The starting year 2017 was chosen because the previous syntheses have included articles up to 2016 (in Draper et al., 2018), so that this synopsis can avoid some overlap and focus on most updated literature. To avoid the issue of concentration of journal fields as identified in the previous section, this synopsis includes any journal article on the subject of business events regardless of the journal field. Several keywords were searched on online publication databases including Google Scholar, Scopus, EBSCO Host, Science Direct, Emerald, Web of Science,

ProQuest and Sage (Le, Arcodia, Abreu Novais, & Kralj, 2019) using the categories in Mair's (2012) review of business events. These included "business events", "MICE", "meetings", "incentives", "conventions", "conferences", "exhibitions". This chapter also added "expositions" and "expo" to ensure the comprehensiveness of the search results. Only full-length articles were collected, so editorials, short notes or book reviews were excluded (Mair, 2012; Park & Park, 2017; Le et al., 2019). Those articles in which the business events context was mentioned briefly were also excluded from the analysis. The final total of articles to be analysed was 78.

This snapshot focuses on identifying research themes of business events literature by utilising thematic analysis, specifically the key research themes and sub-themes in event management research identified by Park and Park (2017). The nine key themes were destination, management, marketing, HR, evaluation, planning, education, trends and technology. This set of event management research themes and sub-themes are deemed highly credible and reliable since they were generated from a large dataset (i.e. 698 event-related articles) and were thematically coded with high intercoder reliability indices (Park & Park, 2017), thus yielding a high level of reproducibility for subsequent reviews in event-related research.

With regard to journal fields (see Table 1.2), the majority of articles focusing on business events were published in tourism, hospitality and events-related journals (56 articles – 71.8%). This is consistent with what have been portrayed in previous reviews regarding the inherent connection of event studies with tourism and hospitality systems (Mair, 2012; Getz & Page, 2016). A much fewer number of articles have been published in the field of sustainability (6 articles – 7.7%), information and communication technology (ICT) and general business (6 articles – 7.7%). Apart from sustainability as an emerging research field that requires more scholarly attention as suggested by Mair (2012), ICT journals have also appeared in the journal fields that publish business events

studies. In spite of being published in ICT journals, these three articles (i.e. Choi & Kim, 2017; Lee, Yoon, Smith, Park, & Park, 2017; Migliaccio, Carrion, & Ferrario, 2019) all have critical implications regarding utilising user-generated content (i.e. tweets and Instagram posts) and virtual reality in managing and improving attendees' experiences at business events, thus are considered as extremely relevant to business events scholarship. This once again highlights the significance of including journals beyond the field of tourism, hospitality and events, especially with the rising application of technological advances in the business events sector post COVID-19 (Yung & Le, 2022; Yung et al., 2022).

<COMP: Place Table 1.2 Here>

In terms of types of business events, apart from examining business events in general (26 articles – 33.3%), the majority of recent literature has focused specifically on expositions (22 articles – 28.2%) and exhibitions (20 articles – 25.6%). This is attributed to the growing number of mega expositions held between 2010 and 2020 (e.g. Shanghai World Expo 2010; Milan World Expo 2015, Dubai Expo 2020), which created substantial research materials and agendas for event scholars (see Table 1.3). In addition, exhibitions have been well received in business events research as this type of event is considered critical for boosting tourism demand, not only from attendees but also exhibitors (Godar & O'Connor, 2001). Many large-scale exhibitions have

become tourist destinations and thus studying attendees' behaviour and their onsite experiences in the exhibition industry has become critically essential (Yi, Fu, Jin, & Okumus, 2018). Several studies in the exhibition context have also examined technical aspects such as exhibition design, exhibition content, and energy and crowd management using spatial geographical technology in addition to researching consumer behaviour, which in turn shift the research fields beyond tourism, hospitality and events.

<COMP: Place Table 1.3 Here>

Thematic analysis of 78 articles was conducted to investigate the trends in themes in business events research, using the event management research themes

and sub-themes identified by Park and Park (2017). Table 1.4 outlines the frequency of those key themes and sub-themes including the new sub-themes identified in this thematic analysis. In terms of research themes, between 2017 and 2020, the most two popular research topics were marketing (37.2%) and destination (34.6%). Management (17.9%) and planning (15.4%) have been less substantially explored. Researchers have also investigated evaluation (11.5%), technology (11.5%) and trends (10.3%). Education (7.7%) and HR (5.1%) have attracted far less attention among researchers. These findings portray notable differences from Park and Park's (2017) ranking of research themes. While marketing, destination and management remain the three most important themes

in event-related research, these are getting less scholarly attention towards 2020. In contrast, planning, evaluation and technology have been increasingly attended by researchers over the period and generated several noteworthy sub-themes.

It should be noted that the selection of 78 articles did not yet capture articles with COVID-19 focus. In 2021, the number of articles in these three topics will certainly be booming amid the pandemic's impacts considering nearly every (business) event has been cancelled, postponed or hosted online. Virtual events, therefore, have been and will be dominant in terms of frequency and importance in response to advances in global technology, as well as in response to globalisation forces and the costs or risks of

travel during the pandemic. The sub-theme of hybrid/mixed reality/virtual reality will therefore become a popular research sub-theme under the topic of technological advancement in business events. Planning and evaluation as a result will also be common research topics in response to the pandemic's impacts.

<COMP: Place Table 1.4 Here>

Implications for Business Events Sector

This chapter has provided two distinctive syntheses of literature in the business events sector. First, it conducts an evaluation of existing literature reviews that target or include business events in the discussion, in order to depict research gaps and directions proposed by such

reviews. In doing so, this chapter also pinpoints several shortcomings in conducting literature reviews in event management research. Second, based on the shortcomings identified in the evaluation, this chapter offers a synopsis of 78 business events articles between 2017 and 2020, in order to present the trends by research themes, journal fields and types of business events. Both syntheses demonstrated in this chapter have provided important insights for business event researchers and organisers. Theoretically, the progress specifically related to contemporary business events has not been strongly emphasised in the extant literature reviews. The research gaps related to business events literature were dispersed and diluted among other dominant types of planned

events such as festivals and sport events. There has been an absence of a critical and comprehensive state-of-the-art review of business events research since Mair's (2012) review of business events. Nevertheless, the need for stand-alone review in business events research has been supported by several researchers (Draper et al., 2018; Kim & Kaewnuch, 2018). Second, future literature reviews (in business events and in event-related research as a whole) are encouraged to broaden the search scope beyond tourism, hospitality and events journals in order to achieve a comprehensive dataset, especially when the event industry is becoming more inter-disciplinary than ever before (Yung et al., 2022). Finally, it is important that intercoder bias is acknowledged in thematically

analysing in reviewing literature. By computing and reporting intercoder reliability indices if more than one coder involves in the process (e.g. Kim et al., 2013; Park & Park, 2017), the findings' reproducibility is substantially enhanced and allows for more seamless comparison across different review periods and different sub-sectors.

Practically, both the evaluation of literature reviews and the snapshot of recent business events research show that there has been a growing attention to the exhibition sub-sector, including site selection and exhibition design and content to improve attendees' onsite experiences. There has also been increasing scholarly interest in planning, evaluation and technology in business events, with the

adoption of hybrid and virtual events in particular as a result of COVID-19 (Yung et al., 2022). This emerging trend will be further accelerated as the world progresses with the pandemic's impacts while continuously looking for the resolution for the virus. The changing focus in event planning, evaluation and technology offerings in business events might lead to the shift in consumer behaviour (marketing), management strategies, and thus affecting how the business events sector influences host destinations and their tourism development. As a result, it is vital for event organisers and business event stakeholders to keep an eye on the research trends and innovations in this dynamic sector to be able to adapt

rapidly to new environments in the contemporary economy.

Table 1.1 A Summary of 14 literature reviews

targeting/including business events (chronological order)

Author(s) Article name	Review context	Review period	Type of review/analysis	No. of included articles and fields of journals
Carlsen (1996) A review of MICE	MICE in Australasia	1988– 1998	Critical review	<i>Not provide</i>

industry
evaluation
and research
in Asia and
Australia
1988–1998

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<p>Crouch and Ritchie (1998)</p> <p>Convention site selection research: A review, conceptual model and propositional framework</p>	<p>Convention and exhibition site selection</p>	<p>1976–1996</p>	<p>Critical review</p>	<p>64 Articles on factors influencing the convention site selection process collected from online databases</p>

<p>Lee and Back (2005)</p> <p>A review of convention and meeting management research 1990–2003: Identification of statistical methods and subject areas</p>	<p>Convention and meeting management</p>	<p>1990–2003</p>	<p>Statistical and thematic review</p>	<p>137 Articles collected from major hospitality and tourism journals</p>
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<p>Yoo and Weber (2005)</p> <p>Progress in convention tourism research</p>	<p>Convention tourism</p>	<p>1983–2003</p>	<p>Statistical and thematic review</p>	<p>115 Article collected from 14 leading hospitality and tourism journals</p>

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Getz (2008) Event tourism: Definition, evolution and research	Event tourism	1980s– 2000s	Chronological and Thematic Review	<i>Not applicable</i>

Mair (2012) A review of business events literature	Business events	2000– 2009	Statistical and thematic review	144 Article collected from online databases

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Elston and Draper (2012)	Meeting site selection	1977–2011	Thematic review	16 Articles (including trade

<p>A Review of meeting planner site selection criteria research</p>				<p>magazine articles) related to meeting planners' si selection criteria collected from online databases</p>
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<p>Kim, Boo, and Kim (2013)</p> <p>Patterns and trends in event tourism study topics over 30 years</p>	<p>Event tourism</p>	<p>1980–2010</p>	<p>Thematic review with a focus on intercoder reliability</p>	<p>178 Article collected from the <i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>, <i>Journal of Travel Research</i>, and <i>Tourism</i></p>

				<i>Management</i>
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<p>Getz and Page (2016)</p> <p>Progress and prospects for event tourism research</p>	<p>Event tourism</p>	<p>1980s–2010s</p>	<p>Chronological and thematic review</p>	<p><i>Not applicable</i></p>

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Park and Park (2017) Thematic	Event management	1998– 2013	Thematic review with a focus on	592 Article collected from four

trends in event management research			intercoder reliability	event- focused and six leading hospitality and tourism journals
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<p>Sox, Kline, Crews, Strick, and Campbell (2017)</p> <p>Virtual and hybrid meetings: A Mixed research synthesis of 2002–2012 research</p>	<p>Virtual and hybrid meetings</p>	<p>2002–2012</p>	<p>Systematic literature review</p>	<p>67 Articles on virtual and hybrid meetings collected from online databases</p>
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<p>Kim and Kaewnuch (2018)</p> <p>Finding the gaps in event management</p>	<p>Event management</p>	<p>2003–2012</p>	<p>Qualitative meta-analysis</p>	<p>302 Article collected from the <i>International Journal of Event and</i></p>

research: A descriptive meta- analysis				<i>Festival Management Event Management International Journal of Event Management Research, and the Journal of Convention and Event Tourism.</i>
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Draper, Thomas, and Fenich	Event management	2004— 2016	Statistical review	890 Article collected from six

<p>(2018)</p> <p>Event management research over the past 12 years: What are the current trends in research methods, data collection, data analysis</p>				<p>event managemen ten tourism and eight hospitality journals</p>
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procedures
and event
types?

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<p>Wang and Xia (2019)</p> <p>Human-exhibition interaction and exhibition design (HEI) in</p>	<p>Human-exhibition interaction and exhibition design</p>	<p><i>Not provided</i></p>	<p>Systematic literature review</p>	<p>1,467 Documents on exhibition design factors collected</p>

designing exhibitions: A systematic literature review				from online databases
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Table 1.2 Articles by journal field, type of paper and type of business events

	Frequency
Journal Field	
Tourism & hospitality	42
Event	14
Sustainability	6
Information & communication technology	3

(ICT)	
General business	3
General marketing	2
Environment & public health	2
Energy & building	2
Culture	2
Other	5
Type of Paper	
Empirical	69
Conceptual	9
Type of Business Events	
Business events in general	26
Expositions	22

Exhibitions	20
Trade shows/fairs	4
Academic events	3
Conventions	2
Incentives	2
Total articles	78

Table 1.3 Types of business events by year

Type of business events	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Business events in general	7	9	3
Expositions	5	7	7	3
Exhibitions	5	5	6	4
Trade	1	1	1	1

shows/fairs				
Academic events	2			1
Conventions	2			
Incentives	1	1		

Table 1.4 Key themes and sub-themes identified by thematic analysis

	Frequenc				
	y	2017	2018	2019	2020
Marketing	29	9	10	6	4
Customer behaviour	23				
Decision-making	12				
Marketing	8				

strategy					
Expenditure	1				
Destination	27	7	8	6	6
Impact	16				
Sustainability	13				
Image/attributes	5				
Management	14	3	4	4	3
Experiential management	7				
Risk & crisis management	3				
Strategy/governan	2				

ce					
Innovation	2				
Knowledge management	1				
Planning	12	2	3	3	4
Event design/attributes	8				
Infrastructure building	3				
Site selection	1				
Site conservation	1				
Site image	1				

(design and facilities)					
Evaluation	9	3	2	1	3
Event evaluation	4				
Networking	4				
Entrepreneurship	2				
Academic impact	1				
Technology	9	5		4	
Social media	3				
Hybrid/mixed reality/virtual	3				

reality					
Mobile applications	2				
Determinants of adopting technology	2				
Machine learning	1				
Trends	8	3	3	2	
Research reviews	4				
Industry trends	3				
Education	6	2	2	1	1

Study of skills & attributes	6				
Curriculum	2				
Training	0				
HR	4	1	2	1	
Volunteer	1				
Career path	1				
Temporary staff/organisation	1				
Manager & leadership	1				
Total articles	78	23	23	17	15

Note: Terms in bold are event management research themes/sub-themes identified by Park and Park (2017).

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