

## Pulling the long tail of event management research

Authors	Richards,Greg
Published in	Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755">10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755</a>
Publication Date	2022
Document Version	publishersversion
Link	<a href="https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/58ceee36-b284-4956-a892-a9b5e6b55d55">https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/58ceee36-b284-4956-a892-a9b5e6b55d55</a>
Citation	Richards, G 2022, 'Pulling the long tail of event management research', Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 215-218. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755">https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755</a>
Download Date	2026-03-15 10:38:54
Rights	<p>General rights</p> <p>Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.</li> <li>- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain</li> <li>- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal"</li> </ul> <p>Take down policy</p> <p>If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.</p>



## Pulling the long tail of event management research

Greg Richards

To cite this article: Greg Richards (2022) Pulling the long tail of event management research, Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, 14:2, 215-218, DOI: [10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755](https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2021.1890755>



Published online: 24 Feb 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 250



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



## Pulling the long tail of event management research

Greg Richards<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Academy for Leisure, Breda University of Applied Sciences, Breda, The Netherlands; <sup>b</sup>Department of Leisure Studies, Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands

### ABSTRACT

This paper comments on the analysis by Leung and Thomas (2021) on the role of specialist event journals in shaping the field of event management research. It agrees with their analysis of the distribution of papers, particularly in terms of the dominance of the English language, although it argues that a wider analysis of the literature reveals a wealth of non-English sources as well. It offers some thoughts on the driving forces behind the distribution of event management publications, including journal ranking systems, economic power and the advent of new information technologies. It argues that journals should act as curators and leaders in the field, helping to open new avenues for research.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 February 2021  
Accepted 11 February 2021

### KEYWORDS

Event management; event research; curation; impact factors; linguistic diversity

A comment on Emmy Yeung and Rhodri Thomas (2021). The ‘long tail’ of event management research: evidence from the field’s main journals. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2020.1862855>.

Emmy Yeung and Rhodri Thomas raise some interesting questions about event management research in their analysis of papers in major event-related journals. Their study attempts to address two basic questions: how internationally dispersed is a research activity in this field and how concentrated is research output? The evidence that they produce is based on a review of papers in Scopus from ‘the four most prominent dedicated journals in the field’: *Event Management*; the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*; the *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*; and the *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*. The analysis of papers from these journals indeed shows a high level of geographical concentration, both in terms of countries and specific universities contributing to the literature analysed. This ‘long tail’ distribution of event management papers might also be expected from Bradford’s Law, which describes the diminishing returns of searching for references in an increasing number of scientific journals (e.g. Bhowmik, 2021).

As in any study of this kind, much rests on the methods used and the assumptions made. The restriction of the sample of events-focussed journals to English language sources introduces the first limitation by excluding more generic journals and non-English papers. As a recent area of scholarship, specific journals dedicated to event

management are still a relatively new phenomenon. *Event Management* (EM) was founded in 1993 as *Festival Management and Event Tourism*, the *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism* (JCET) stated in 1998, the *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (JPRTLE) was launched in 2009 and the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* (IJEFM) in 2010. Limiting the search to the decade 2009–2019 is a useful way of covering JPRTLE output since the journal was founded, although IJEFM didn't start until 2010, and JCET and EM had been going for much longer. Given the limited universe of event-oriented journals in the 1980s and 1990s, it is not surprising that much event research was published in non-specialist journals. Looking at the reference period 2009–2019, a search for 'event management' papers in Scopus shows that of 415 documents, only 139 were published in the four English language event journals used by Yeung and Thomas (33%). This indicates that a large body of event management research is still published outside the main specialist event journals.

Perhaps, the key to this is the relatively young age of the event journals and therefore their relatively low ranking in the overall tourism and hospitality field. The highest-ranked event journal is currently *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* (SJR impact factor 0.554) followed by the *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (0.425), followed by *Event Management* (0.344) and the *Journal of Convention and Event Management* (0.309). In contrast, the top-scoring journal is *Tourism Management* (SJR 3.07). Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, *Tourism Management* and other high-scoring tourism and hospitality journals also tend to attract a large number of event-related papers. In fact, Ken Backman, editor of *Event Management* took to the pages to *Tourism Management Perspectives* (SJR 1.19) to publish his recent review of event management research.

There is a basic assumption that all the papers published in these journals (with the exception of JPRTLE, for which a selection was made) relate directly to the event management research. In fact, some of the event-related research published in these specialist journals relates to areas other than event management, such as the sociology of events, or events, which are not formally organised or managed. This gap is underlined by the fact that Yeung and Thomas found 861 event papers in total in the four leading event journals, whereas a search for 'event management' in business and social science journals in Scopus for 2009–2019 yielded only 398 articles, of which *Event Management* accounted for 73 papers, the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* for 39 papers, the *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism* 18 papers and the *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* 6 papers. This broadly reflects the distribution of papers reported by Yeung and Thomas, but it also indicates that many of the papers published in these journals are also not narrowly related to event management. The four event management journals account for a total of 123 papers (31%), with the majority appearing in non-event journals. The fact that a lot of event research is published outside the event journals reflects the strong links between event scholarship and tourism and hospitality noted by the authors.

Yeung and Thomas also note the prevalence of English papers and authors in the event management field. Of course, English might be expected to dominate the field, but the extent of this dominance also depends on the search strategy. If other languages are included, then many more results appear. A search using the Spanish term *gestión de*

*eventos* in SCOPUS on 7 February 2021 yielded 424 documents in the broad subject areas of social science and business and management gestion AND de AND eventos AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, 'SOCI') OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, 'BUSI')). China is also rapidly becoming a leading producer of scientific publications, and this is also reflected in the events field. A search for 'Event management' in the China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database (CNKI) database (<https://eng.oversea.cnki.net/>) for the period 2009–2019 generated 239 articles. More significantly, the terms 'festival' and 'culture' resulted in 2113 items, indicating a significant slant towards cultural events in the Chinese literature.

This cursory examination of event management publications in languages other than English underlines that a large body of literature will be ignored by searches conducted in the English language, and inevitably lead to the conclusion that the field is dominated by English language publications. This might be the case for English language journals, which also tend to dominate databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science, but it does not reflect the literature as a whole. So Yeung and Thomas' conclusion that there is 'a geographically concentrated community of linguistically advantaged scholars that dominate the academy' has to be nuanced to some extent.

Different countries also have different priorities in terms of event research. In addition to the concentration on cultural festivals in China, described above, Backman (2018, p. 170) notes:

There is also what appears to be an uneven distribution of research effort in event management, with the majority of event research coming from Europe, Australia and Asia today. This suggests that North American researchers are behind if not in production, likely in depth of knowledge regarding the changing concept of events and understanding their markets. An alternative conclusion may be that North American researchers are more focused on niche areas within events such as weddings.

There is some evidence in Scopus to back up Backman's suggestion about weddings as a niche – North American authors dominate the literature on wedding planning, for example. However, the general geographical distribution noted by Backman mirrors the quantitative analysis produced by Yeung and Thomas.

What is perhaps more significant than the issues of language and event type are the underlying power structures behind the observed patterns of publications. Not only the English language but also economic wealth has a large influence. This is also becoming more significant because of the shift towards new publication models by the major journals, with payment for open access becoming a much more widespread model. Where journals only adopt a paid open access format, this will tend to limit publication opportunities for academics from poorer countries.

The shift towards open access has also been stimulated by technological changes which make it much cheaper to offer journals online. This introduces another potential source of inequality for countries with poorly developed internet infrastructure and/or high data charges. More significantly for journals such as JPRTLE, however, is the effect of electronic data access on the way academics consume journals. In the old days, a wander through the library stack was needed to find back issues of the physical journal, which also led to chance encounters with papers from the same issue or volume of the same journal. The physical search process arguably strengthened the

identity of the journal, particularly where a limited number of titles were available in a particular field. Today, the ease of electronic searching means that readers often don't look at the journal per se – but skim articles they are interested in from many different sources. Search engines such as Scopus or Google Scholar actually make it easier to find unrelated articles than to read through a journal issue. This raises questions about the functions of academic journals in the digital era. To what extent do we need specialist journals when general titles such as *Sustainability* will publish on a wide range of topics (including papers on event management of course – *Sustainability* had published 15 papers in this field by February 2021), and from which specialist papers can be extracted by the readers who need them?

Perhaps, this existential threat to the traditional roles of journals explains why special issues have been making a comeback. *Annals of Tourism Research*, which stopped publishing special issues in 1996, suddenly re-instated them as 'curated collections' compiled by high-profile editors. This is one more example of the 'curatorial turn' (Richards, 2021) brought about by new technology, in which the act of curation helps us plot a course through the information jungle in search of new sources of value. With the rise of curation, the role of the journal becomes even more focussed on academic leadership, with journal editors seeking curators who can spot topics that will generate future value, or else becoming curators themselves. An increased curatorial input may also provide an antidote to the serial reproduction seen in many journals, where papers tend to follow previous publications in terms of subject focus and methodology. As Lamond and Lashua (2021) argue, there is a need to open up the study of events from a narrow focus on event management to a wider realm of possibilities that include the role of events as transformational social moments, carriers of cultural meaning and modes of framing (Richards, 2020). Journals like JPRTLE can play a role in opening paths to these multiple possibilities and expanding the horizons of event research to add greater future value to the field.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## References

- Backman, K. F. (2018). Event management research: The focus today and in the future. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 25, 169–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.12.004>
- Bhowmik, P. (2021). Heritage tourism: A bibliometric review. *Anatolia*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.1875250>
- Lamond, I. R., & Lashua, B. (2021). Leisure, activism, and the animation of the urban environment. *Leisure Studies*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2020.1869291>
- Richards, G. (2020). The value of event networks and platforms: Evidence from a multi-annual cultural programme. *Event Management*, 25(1), 85–97. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599520X15894679115501>
- Richards, G. (2021). *Rethinking cultural tourism*. Edward Elgar.