Guest Editorial for IJCHM Vol 33 Issue 5 2021
Contemporary Issues in Event Management: a tribute to Dr. Mathilda van Niekerk

Welcome to the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management's (IJCHM)* special issue on Contemporary Issues in Event Management: a tribute to Dr. Mathilda van Niekerk. Dr. van Niekerk was the Managing Editor of IJCHM. She was also the Founding Co-Editor of the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* (JHTI). I acknowledged and reflected her contributions to both journals as well as her personality and approach to research in my editorials (Okumus, 2020a; b). After Mathilda's passing in August 2019, Dr. Jeannie Hahm, Dr. Karin Weber, Prof. Don Getz and Prof. Rhodri Thomas kindly agreed to guest edit a special issue in event management research as a tribute to her. In addition to being Mathilda's close friends, our guest editors are leading scholars in the event management field and worked with Mathilda on research projects. I would like to sincerely thank our guest editors for putting together this very strong and timely special issue. The articles included in this special issue should be well received by scholars, students and practicing managers in our field. I am sure Mathilda would have been very happy with this special issue as well as IJCHM's continuous outstanding progress and successes in recent years. Rest in peace Mathilda! You are always missed and remembered!

Fevzi Okumus
Editor-in-Chief

Guest Editorial *

* Some parts of this editorial are published in the Special Issue: Contemporary Issues in Event Management in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, Vol. 4 No. 2, 2021.

Warmth, ambition and leadership in event management research: a tribute to Dr Mathilda van Niekerk
This special issue is created to pay tribute to the late Dr. Mathilda van Niekerk who served as the Managing Editor of the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (IJCHM)* and the Founding Co-Editor of the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights (JHTI).* She was also the Guest Editor of the first special issue related to events that was published in IJCHM in 2017. The tremendous contributions she made to the advancement of both journals, and the dedicated and caring support she offered to authors from diverse backgrounds, have been acknowledged by her editorial partner, University of Central Florida colleague and friend, Prof. Fevzi Okumus (Okumus, 2020a; b).

In addition to enabling many others, Mathilda contributed immensely in her own right to cutting edge research and education in the field of event management and related fields. Indeed, she was the author or co-author of more than 100 internationally recognized papers. Her scholarship was conspicuously informed by the various industry leadership positions she held prior to joining academia. Becoming the cluster leader in Nelspruit, South Africa, overseeing the marketing, communication and events in the area during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, was particularly influential. Mathilda's professional background, coupled with her personal values, also led her to advocate strongly for better community participation models so that the benefits gained from

hosting events could be shared. These experiences also reinforced her belief that papers published in academic journals should not only offer theoretical contributions but contain valuable practical implications.

Yet, despite her achievements, it is probably Mathilda's enthusiasm, passion and sensitivity that come to mind for most of those from around the world who encountered her. A true positive force of nature, despite the very difficult health challenges she faced; she was always ready to encourage, nurture, and ultimately, inspire, with no obstacle seemingly too big as not to try overcoming it. The many heartfelt tributes from students, colleagues and friends expressed after Mathilda's passing are testimony to this.

On a personal level, each of us had the pleasure of contributing to what was probably one of Mathilda's final masterclasses in practical event management. She led the team organizing the 4th International Conference on Events (ICE) in Orlando in December 2017 with flair and from the front! Her colleagues and delegates were reminded of the part they needed to play with much humor and enthusiasm. Not only was the program stimulating but she also ensured that networks were developed inclusively regardless of rank or background. At the successful conclusion of this conference, it was announced that the subsequent ICE would be hosted in Cape Town, in her home country of South Africa. Sadly, she would only be able to join in spirit, yet, her legacy remains.

The papers in this special issue
This special issue presents nine papers on a variety of topics and in an assortment of contexts. They reflect the richness of events research, especially as they draw upon an array of quantitative and qualitative methods. Those adopting the former use data analysis techniques, such as factor analysis, linear, hierarchical and polynomial regression, response surface analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM). The latter utilize content analysis, thematic analysis, and network analysis to inform their observations. The international perspectives offered, drawing on data from Australia, China, Croatia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain and the United States, illustrate the global interest in events research and would have been welcomed, we feel sure, by Mathilda. In the following, we briefly introduce the papers in this special issue.

The first, entitled "The triple grief cycle of cancelled event: The emotional crisis aftermath" by Lin, Wong, Lin and Liao (2021), is poignantly timely. It explored attendees' emotional responses to the cancelled NCAA basketball tournament due to the global pandemic. The authors collected user-generated messages from Twitter and organized lexical patterns into categories and higher-order themes based on the triple grief cycle. Social network analyses using UCINET was performed to demonstrate how the different grief phases inter-related into the complex network of grief messages. The results showed a three-layer hierarchy of grief related to the event, socio-politics, and the crisis and that attendees' self-expression is manifested through a continuum of denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance.

Social media was the main theme of second paper. Sun, Leung and Bai (2021) investigated social media influencer's (SMI) endorsement impact on followers' attitude and behavioral intentions. The authors developed an integrated framework of SMI marketing based on congruity theory of attitude change. PLS-SEM and multi-group analysis were conducted to test the data

from 355 responses. The results suggested that a follower's attitude and behavioral intentions toward an event are affected by influencer attitudes. In addition, followers' social media post attitude plays a mediating role, and female followers are more directly impacted by their influencer attitude.

The third paper by Wang, Fu and Lin (2021) investigated how regret and perfectionism of attendees at a food exposition influence their purchasing strategy. This is a first-of-its-kind study exploring the purchasing mechanism from the perspective of mental budgeting at a healthy food exposition. The authors used structural equation modeling to test the proposed model and found that the psychological mechanism (i.e., regret and perfectionism) affects exposition attendees' purchasing strategy. More specifically, variety seeking positively affected purchase confidence, while price consciousness negatively influenced purchase confidence.

Folgado-Fernández, Duarte and Hernández-Mogollón (2021) examined the impacts of communication and structural and non-structural elements on tourists' rational and emotional engagement of five different types of events (i.e., nature, gastronomy, religion, theatre, and music). Data were collected from 1,528 tourists in a cultural tourism destination, the Spanish region of Extremadura. Linear regression results revealed that non-structural elements influenced rational and emotional engagement for gastronomic and cultural events. Other factors had mixed influence on both types of engagements. The authors suggested that hosting events is a helpful way to attract tourists and promote engagement with a destination.

The use of events to empower marginalized groups was investigated and reported by Walters, Stadler and Jepson (2021). They explored the positive outcomes of power relationships by investigating eight events for marginalized groups (i.e., indigenous and ethnic minorities, rural women, the disabled, and seniors). The authors collected data via participant observations, reflexive ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and in-the-moment conversations, and used an inductive thematic approach to analyze the qualitative data. They presented a framework and identified eight themes from the analysis: providing a platform, giving/taking ownership, gaining confidence, empowering with/through knowledge, respect, pride and affirmation, freedom to 'be', and resistance.

The sixth paper is entitled "Supply chain flexibility fit and green practices: Evidence from the event industry." Cho and Yoo (2021) examined the role of supply chain flexibility fit between event planners' requirements and the suppliers' offerings on implementing green practices. The authors used resource orchestration theory to explain the planner-supplier flexibility fit. There were 207 responses collected from event planners, with data being analyzed using polynomial regression and response surface analysis. The moderating effects of green organization image and public pressure on the proposed relationships were tested using hierarchical regression analysis. This study revealed that product flexibility fit positively influenced green practices and public pressure significantly improved the effect.

In "Pre-event competitiveness: Exploring residents' perceptions of place management and local impacts," Wise, Đurkin Badurina and Perić (2021) suggest that competitiveness research typically concentrates on outcomes (e.g., tangible outcomes, deliverables, and value for visitors). This study focused on competitiveness as a beginning by examining pre-event resident

perceptions of place management and local impacts. A total of 454 surveys were collected from local residents during event development and analyzed using exploratory factor analysis and t-tests to reveal that enthusiasm and information availability strongly impact residents' perceptions more than participation in pre-event activities.

The penultimate paper is a conceptual paper that presented a new research framework for event portfolios. Antchak, Lück and Pernecky (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of two cities in New Zealand to examine the differences in portfolio contexts. The cities contrasted in size, institutional arrangements, and event policy frameworks. The study provided a strategic and sustainable framework for destinations that might adopt a formalized portfolio or an organic portfolio based on event portfolio objectives, compositional diversity, and local context.

The final paper in this special issue explored strategic actions taken by external event stakeholders to advance their interests and resource relationships in tourism events. Tiew, Holmes and de Bussy (2021) used a qualitative case study design and interviewed 37 external stakeholders of five government-owned events in Sarawak, Malaysia. The findings showed that the stakeholders were not overly dependent on their events and used subtle, positive, and collaborative influence strategies. The study identified two types of resource relationships: event-dependent stakeholders and event non-dependent stakeholders.

The practical implications of events research
Like many of her colleagues, Mathilda considered practitioner relevance to be an important aspect of her work as an event management researcher. Her studies of tourism events (e.g., Zamani-Farahani *et al.*, 2019) and the conferences she organised at Rosen College (e.g., https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ice2017/) exemplify her efforts to build bridges between theory and practice. Journals such as this, with which she was closely associated, expect contributors to explain not only the purpose of their research and its findings but also its implications for management, policymakers, or other stakeholders. Although routinely included, discussion of the practical value of events research often appears perfunctory and recommendations rarely attract critical scrutiny from others. It would be highly unusual for a paper to be rejected on the grounds of its lack of value to practitioners (as tested by practitioners), for example, and there is no evaluation of whether papers gain any traction with those they claim to help.

Although there is legitimate debate about the extent to which academic researchers in this field have succeeded in gaining influence over those responsible for planned events (e.g., Thomas 2018; 2020), most scholars accept the idea of research relevance as an aspiration. This is not surprising; it would curious, indeed, for researchers to investigate topics such as attendee behaviour, the environmental impacts of festivals or events legacies but then not consider it important to think about how such events might change to induce better outcomes.

Several commentators have turned their attention to how such impact might be achieved. Most guides (e.g., Denicolo, 2013; Reed, 2018) are predicated on two fundamental principles. The first is the need to address research questions that are at least considered relevant by others (and from which they will benefit), and secondly, that active intervention by the researcher (formalised as an impact plan) is required if influence is to be secured. Such plans would include strategies to build useful and trusting networks, and means of communicating findings in ways accessible to

practitioners. Inevitably, even these basic tenets are open to question, as is illustrated by the debate between Dredge (2015), Thomas (2015), and others on the necessity for relevance in academic policy research.

Some of the more progressive approaches to securing impact emphasise deeper collaboration with those they seek to support or influence. They highlight the importance of shared knowledge production between participants and researchers as a means of enhancing insights into the organisational and social worlds being investigated (e.g., Cockburn-Wootten *et al.*, 2018; Duxbury *et al.*, 2019; Schweinsberg *et al.*, 2018). Although each of these papers documents significant challenges arising from their collaboration, they also report positive outcomes in their attempts to effect changes in public policies or practitioner practices.

TABLE I ABOUT HERE

Table I contains details of the papers that appear in this special issue considered from the perspective of their potential impact on practitioners and other policymakers. Clearly, the observations contained in the table are speculative. Nevertheless, they are instructive for their revelation of three things. First, none of the authors appear to have arrived at their research problem in collaboration with practitioners. They are, of course, not unusual in this. Second, none of the projects were conducted with practitioner partners who helped shape research design and interpretation of findings. We suspect that the majority of papers on events would also be designed with similar notions of scientific rigour. Finally, most authors alluded to practical implications in an almost perfunctory manner with little or no evidence to suggest that the work was associated with any kind of impact plan. The literature referred to above suggests that in these circumstances, impact is likely to be sub-optimal.

In raising these issues, our intention is not to be critical of the papers in this special issue. To the contrary, our approbation is confirmed by our having selected them from a long list of initial submissions. Instead, our purpose is to raise awareness of an issue we suspect that Mathilda would have been keen to pursue, namely finding better ways of strengthening links between academic research and practice.

References

Antchak, V., Lück, M. and Pernecky, T. (2021), "Understanding the core elements of event portfolio strategy: Lessons from Auckland and Dunedin", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Cho, M. and Yoo, J.J. (2021), "Supply chain flexibility fit and green practices: Evidence from the event industry", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Cockburn-Wootten, C., McIntosh, A.J., Smith, K. and Jefferies, S. (2018), "Communicating across tourism silos for inclusive sustainable partnerships", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 26 No. 9, pp. 1483-1498.

Denicolo, P. (2013), *Achieving impact in research,* Sage, London, UK.

Dredge, D. (2015), "Does relevance matter in academic policy research?" *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 173-177.

Duxbury, N., Bakas, F.E. and Pato de Carvalho, C. (2019), "Why is research-practice collaboration so challenging to achieve? A creative tourism experiment" *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 23 No. 1-2, pp. 318-343.

Folgado-Fernández, J.A., Duarte, P. and Hernández-Mogollón, J.M. (2021), "Tourist's rational and emotional engagement across events: A multi-event integration view", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Laing, J. (2018), "Festival and event tourism research: Current and future perspectives" *Tourism Management Perspectives*, Vol. 25, pp. 165-168.

Lin, S., Wong, I. A., Lin, L. and Liao, R. (2021), "Triple grief cycle of cancelled event: The emotional crisis aftermath", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Okumus, F. (2020a), "Editorial", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 1-2.

Okumus, F. (2020b), "Editorial tribute to Dr. Mathilda Van Niekerk", *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 1-2.

Reed, M.S. (2018), *The research impact handbook (2nd ed.)*, Fast Track Impact, UK.

Schweinsberg, S., Heizmann, H., Darcy, S., Wearing, S. and Djolic, M. (2018), "Establishing academic leadership praxis in sustainable tourism: Lessons from the past and bridges to the future", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 26 No. 9, pp. 1577-1586.

Sun, J., Leung, X. and Bai, B. (2021), "How social media influencer's event endorsement changes attitudes of followers: The moderating effect of followers' gender", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Thomas, H. (2015), "Does relevance matter in academic policy research? A comment on Dredge" *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events,* Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 178-182.

Thomas, R. (2018), *Questioning the assessment of research impact: Illusions, myths and marginal sectors*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, UK.

Thomas, R. (2020), "Problematising 'The impact of tourism research': A reply to Brauer, Dymitrow, and Tribe (2019)", *Annals of Tourism Research*, pp. 102968-102968.

Tiew, F., Holmes, K. and de Bussy, N. (2021), "Events' external stakeholders and their influence strategies in tourism: Perspectives from Borneo", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Walters, T., Stadler, R. and Jepson, A. (2021), "Positive power: Events as temporary sites of power which "empower" marginalised groups", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Wang, Y., Fu, X. and Lin, B. (2021), "Healthy food exposition attendees' purchasing strategies: A mental budgeting perspective", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Wise, N., Đurkin Badurina, J. and Perić, M. (2021), "Pre-event competitiveness: Exploring residents' perceptions of place management and local impacts", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 33 No. 5.

Zamani-Farahani, H., van Niekerk, M. and Mathis, E.F. (2019), "From an event to tourist attraction: A typological study of New Year celebrations", *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events"*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 94-120.

Table I Strengthening the impact of academic research in events studies and management

Authors	Research *What is the focus of the research and its findings?*	Stakeholder involvement *Are potential beneficiaries involved in problem identification and research design?*	Planning for impact *What are the practical implications of the study?*	Securing impact *What do authors suggest as a means of securing impact? Is there a clear plan? How will evidence of impact be measured or monitored?*	Challenges of securing impact *What else might need to happen if impact is to be secured?*
in *et al*. 2021)	Prospective attendees' emotional responses to events that are cancelled. This is seen as particularly relevant during pandemics.	No evidence of collaboration.	Inclusion of mitigating measures in the event planning process. Provides an example of good practice for sports events.	These issues are not addressed systematically.	A plan to engage practitioners in a dialogue might lead to feasible practitioner actions even when resources are more limited than those enjoyed by major sports associations (who were already acting).
un *et al*. 2021)	Clearer understanding of how social media influencers (SMI) affect event attendees' attitudes and behaviours, with particular reference to gender.	No evidence of collaboration.	Event marketers should be aware of the value of SMI marketing and consider who will be influenced by particular SMIs. Once selected, event organiser should work with SMI to agree types of posts that would be most effective.	Suggest practitioners survey followers of SMI and/or review their posts to see whether they are appropriate for the planned event. No detail on design, feasibility, or how impact might be monitored.	Establish whether practitioners draw upon tacit knowledge effectively to make decisions on SMI investment. Design tools that might be used by practitioners as appropriate. Plan to measure impact.
Wang *et l*. (2021)	Explains exhibition attendees' consumption-related psychological mechanisms in order to reduce uncertainty in on-site decision-making.	No evidence of collaboration.	By utilising the findings of this research, attendees will be less hesitant about spending.	Exhibition organisers might: (i) Survey past and potential participants and build a database of preferences and consumer characteristics; (ii) Find ways of minimising post-purchase regret.	How practical is the use of a survey? Is there any evidence of success? Have managers been part of conversations about experience creation of the type advocated? How would impact be measured?
olgado-ernández	Examines tourists' rational and emotional engagement across	No evidence of collaboration.	By understanding the mechanisms for tourists'	Little detail on *how* practitioners might achieve the stated goals	Evolution of a plan – designed with practitioners – to develop

et al. (2021)	five different types of events (nature, gastronomy, religion, theatre, and music).		engagement with events, tourism managers can communicate with target audiences more effectively and develop customised programs.	and benefits.	tools and interventions to achieve the desired outcomes. Find ways of measuring impact.
Walters *et l*. (2021)	Events examined via notions of power and empowerment at and through events.	Identified as an important next step.	Findings enable event organisers to plan more effectively for the productive use of power. This might reaffirm event aims, objectives, and values.	Provide readers with indicative next steps for securing impact. Suggestions include trialling of the framework and working with stakeholders in that process. Consider the need for monitoring and evaluating impact.	It is evident that careful consideration has been given to how this research might become useful to practitioners.
ho and Yoo 2021)	Study of supply chain flexibility and implementation of environmental practices. Identification of the moderating roles of organization image and public pressure on adoption of such practices.	No evidence of collaboration.	Findings suggest ways in which event managers can engage with supply chains to enable the adoption of environmental practices.	General notions of collaboration being beneficial are raised but with little development.	Is this a concern for practitioners? Are practitioners able to create the interventions alluded to? These and other questions probably need to be considered before there is any likelihood of impact.
Wise *et al*. 2021)	Suggests that destination competitiveness, including that achieved via events, should not be assessed as an outcome. Greater attention should be paid to early interventions.	No evidence of collaboration.	Longer-term benefits arising from planned events.	Suggests a need for assessment of pre-event resident perceptions and as events unfold. Advocates communication strategy for local population.	A plan to persuade local policymakers of the feasibility, cost, and value of this approach would probably be needed as a first step to securing impact.
Antchak t al. 2021)	Proposes a new framework for undertaking comparative studies of different event portfolio strategies.	No evidence of collaboration.	Emphasises importance of aligning event objectives with city (destination) objectives and use of appropriate evaluation tools. Shows why understanding the politics of	These issues are not addressed systematically.	An empirical demonstration of the value of the framework would probably be a prerequisite to adoption of the framework.

			stakeholder involvement matters.		
Tiew *et al.* (2021)	Provides greater understanding of external event stakeholders' strategies.	No evidence of collaboration.	By understanding external stakeholder strategies, event managers will be in a better position to use such knowledge to secure resources for their events.	Reference to range of possible ways of collaborating but only in a general manner.	Clear empirical evidence of benefit probably required before contemplating impact plan.