

Industry Paper

Business Event Legacies – Website Analysis and a Process Approach

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*Economic Impact, Tourism Boost, Community Involvement,
Infrastructure Development, Intellectual Capital*

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Industry Viewpoint

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ABSTRACT

Business event legacies are widely promoted, but academic research remains in its infancy. This industry viewpoint seeks to excavate business event legacies from websites of member destinations within the Best Cities Alliance, given that it claims it is a network of best practices related to impacts and legacies. It was observed that 8 out of the 12 destinations feature legacies on their websites and that environmental legacies were the most frequently listed areas of impact. Interestingly, social legacies were identified more often than economic legacies, even though some of these indicators suggest that changes may only be realised in the long-term future. Most of the exemplars of Best Cities Alliance destinations also showcase business event legacies in situ rather than considering how pre- and post-event legacies can be intentionally designed. Derived from the outcomes of this industry viewpoint (or the lack thereof) has led to the development of a process approach to business event legacy consideration and operationalisation.

KEYWORDS

Economic Impact, Tourism Boost, Community Involvement, Infrastructure Development, Intellectual Capital

In this context, the term legacy can be broadly understood as how an event gives back to the host community across sustainable pillars such as economic, social, and environmental outcomes (Tsaour, Yen, Tu, Wang & Liang 2017). Legacy outcomes are increasingly expected out of business events, as they often feature domestic and international delegates visiting a destination with significantly higher spending propensity and extended lengths of stay (Foley, Schlenker, Edwards & Lewis-Smith 2013). In addition, there is a global push for the industry to articulate tangible and intangible sustainable legacies so that the sector also aligns itself with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (BestCities, 2020; UFI 2019). Emerging literature reveals some evidence of how business events can enact legacies across different aspects of their activities (Tham, Ting, Yusrini & Ho, 2023).

Reflecting the growing importance of business event impacts and legacies has led to 12 cities coming together to form the Best Cities Alliance (<https://www.bestcities.net/>). The legacy narrative was inked in collaboration with agencies such as GainingEdge and MeetDenmark. One of the key pillars within MeetDenmark is the Copenhagen Legacy Lab, a trailblazer in articulating a series of business event legacies that are built on evidence-based research and scholarship (Patrick, 2022). Other key influences on the nomenclature of Best Cities Alliance include Genevieve Leclerc and her work on Meet4Impact to unpack the desired social capital as appropriated from the business event in context (Lancaster, 2021). This network coalesces a group of like-minded destinations that are keen to intentionally leverage one another's best practices and develop sustainable impacts and legacies across their different business events. Formed in 2000, Best Cities has since initiated several dialogues and forums to help its members integrate impacts and legacies towards mutual goals of interest. As such, this industry viewpoint seeks to excavate business event legacies emanating out of the different Best Cities destinations, as evidenced on its official business event websites. Based on the broad classification of best event legacies into economic, social, and environmental legacies, Table 1 illustrates which cities and what legacies are identified.

Best Cities Alliance	Examples of Legacies	Economic	Social	Environmental
Berlin	Offsetting CO2			◆
	Barrier-free access		◆	
	Public transport			◆
	Renewable energy	◆		◆
	Sustainable cutlery			◆
	Reducing food waste			◆
	Plastic-free logistics			◆

	Venues in non-conventional locations e.g. schools	◆	◆	
	Bike tours	◆	◆	◆
	Voluntour opportunities		◆	
	Fundraising	◆	◆	
	Sustainable suppliers			◆
Copenhagen	Sustainable catering		◆	◆
	Public transport			◆
	Bike paths			◆
	Offsettings CO2			◆
	Reducing food waste		◆	◆
	Refillable water	◆		◆
	Plastic-free logistics			◆
	Electric vehicles for tours		◆	◆
	Stakeholder projects	◆	◆	◆
Dublin	Public transport			◆
	Food charity donation		◆	◆
	Sustainable suppliers			◆
	Delegate accessibility		◆	◆
Madrid	Sustainable Suppliers			◆
	Labour and minimum wages	◆	◆	
	Offsetting CO2			◆
	Plastic-free logistics			◆
	Electric transport			◆

	Inclusive workforce	◆	◆		
	Engaging with community	◆	◆	◆	
Melbourne	Offsetting CO2			◆	
	Inclusive participation		◆		
	Sustainable suppliers			◆	
	Engage with local community	◆	◆	◆	
	Plastic-free logistics			◆	
	Reducing food waste			◆	
	Public transport			◆	
	Supporting local charities	◆	◆		
	Refillable water			◆	
	Singapore	Circular economy	◆	◆	◆
		Plastic-free logistics			◆
Electric vehicles				◆	
Public transport				◆	
Sustainable suppliers				◆	
Reducing food waste				◆	
Engage with stakeholders		◆	◆	◆	
Tokyo	Accessibility focus		◆		
	Renewable energy			◆	
	Technological advances	◆		◆	
Vancouver	Food farms			◆	
	Partnering with charity	◆	◆		
	Public transport			◆	

	Offsetting CO2			◆
	Engagement with Indigenous communities			◆
	Electric transport	◆	◆	
	Sustainable suppliers	◆	◆	◆
	Plastic-free logistics	◆	◆	◆
TOTAL		17	23	48

Table 1: Best Cities Alliance business event legacies

Some interesting observations may be gleaned from business event legacies exemplified in Table 1. For instance, only 8 out of 12 cities have explicit links to legacy outcomes/actions, whereas others may have business event legacies documented elsewhere. Unsurprisingly, environmental legacies are most listed, arguably because food waste or carbon footprints, for example, can be calculated based on certain algorithms (Kitamura, Karkour, Ichisugi & Itsubo, 2020). Interestingly, socio-cultural outcomes are stated more frequently as compared to economic legacies, even though for many business events, social impacts and legacies can be difficult to implement as any efforts to enact change may only be realised over the long term. Nonetheless, legacies most likely target in-event rather than pre-/post-event actions. Such outcomes reiterate the complexities of business event research in collecting data over time and space beyond when proceedings take place in situ at a destination (Draper, Liu & Young, 2021).

Nonetheless, derived from Table 1 (or the lack thereof), a process approach to business event legacies is proposed in Figure 1. This figure seeks to inform theory and practice for business events to consider where and how to incorporate legacies across the different stages of business event conceptualisation and operationalisation. While it is acknowledged that legacy measurement over time and space can be challenging to undertake, the work of Foley, Edwards, Jasovska and Hergesell (2016) is a valuable platform to envisage long-term direct and indirect benefits. Then, building on the conceptualisation of Figure 1, such a process approach can, therefore, guide future scholars to empirically test the propositions and ascertain enablers or barriers to delivering business event legacies. Other areas for future investigation include the roles of women, children, marginalised communities, and Indigenous groups in co-creating business event legacies.



Figure 1: A process approach to business event legacies

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