

Special Notes

Book Review: The Routledge Handbook of Business Events (Charles Arcodia, ed.)

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Brief Information on The Book

The Routledge Handbook on Business Events is one of the latest collections of research and viewpoints on a very relevant and important topic in the field of event studies in general and business events in particular.

It consists of a collection of 26 logically aligned chapters, organised in 6 parts. The book is well presented in the introduction by the editor, which gives the reader an overview of the book, explaining the relevance of the explored topics and the rationalisation of the book organisation.

The book's first part smoothly introduces the reader with four chapters devoted to the foundations of business events titled "The World of business events". It continues with the second part and with perhaps one of the most researched areas of business events – events impact. It is followed by two chapters devoted to two well-researched areas and contemporary aspects of business events, i.e., sustainability and technology.

The two final chapters are related to business events marketing (focusing on sponsorship) and operations. The book concludes with a chapter devoted to the future research directions from the editor by summarising the current state of the art in business events.

52 international authors write the entire book and is 315 pages long, well organised, easy to read and is a solid reading material and collection for different reading segments.

Overall Impression

The overall impression of the Routledge Handbook on Business Events is that it is a well-structured collection of studies that contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the still-developing field of business events. It has an easy-to-read style and mainly uses case studies as a method of evidence, data collection and supporting arguments.

The book contains a considerable collection of real-world case studies, which could prove to be useful not only for postgraduate students and researchers but also for professionals working in various areas of business events. Probably one of the main contributions is the international or rather "global" perspective, i.e., the number of cases and examples from different continents and countries, which provide the reader with different points of view in this heterogeneous field of research.

Throughout the book, most contributors used and referenced major work from the field, although there are some exceptions where referencing was not up to date, which might nudge and affect the reader's understanding, but it is proven not to be fatal.

There is one contribution of the book worth outlining, and that is a collection of several chapters that contributed to the field of study within business events with topics that were previously rarely discussed. For instance, chapter 6 in Part 2, "Social value of B2B tradeshows", or Chapter 14, Part 3 "Indigenous business events and organisational legitimacy", and even topics such as sponsorships that were widely discussed in the event studies but with not so much attention in the area of business events like in Chapter 21, Part 6 "Approaches to business event sponsorships".

Overall, the book represents a valuable addition to the existing body of knowledge in the field of business events and deserves thorough attention from the academic and professional community in the field.

Detailed Review

The first part of part of the book consists of 4 chapters aimed to introduce the reader to *"The World of Business Events"*.

The first chapter by Truc H. Le excellently introduces the book with a critical literature review. The analysis shows differences in the research volume, aims, methodology and outputs since the very beginnings, i.e., 1960's to 2016 and from 2017 to 2020. This chapter outlines one key remark in the research of business events so far, and that is the lack of attention to the synthesis of knowledge. In addition, this chapter states and fills one very important fact as well, and that is the fact that *"gaps related to business events literature were dispersed and diluted among other dominant types of planned events such as festivals and sports events"*.

The first part continues with a chapter from Chachaya Yodsuwan and Ken Butcher devoted to the national capabilities for business events, which is not an area that has been often explored. While this chapter lacks the supporting arguments for the methodology they used to evaluate the activities and resources of roles and goals of destinations, it contributes to the body of knowledge with a case study outlining the activities of the Thailand Convention Bureau, which was indicated in the introduction of the chapter. The chapter lacks some of the major work from this field (such as Davidson, R. (2018). *Business Events* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315186344>) and sometimes has overstatements which are not supported with references such as *"Highly developed MICE industries within well-developed economies tend to eschew formal development roles for MICE. Likewise, the countries with the least developed MICE industries also have not implemented formal MICE roles"*. However, this chapter nicely presents the reader with a rarely explored part of the world of business events and provides the reader with valuable practical insights.

The remaining chapters in the first part allow the reader to understand the practical side of the business events. Chapter 3 by Eliza Kitchen focuses on strategic event planning. Although this chapter includes a case study as well, perhaps a better case, with clearer outcomes, could have been selected because the event used for the chapter as a case has been cancelled. Finally, the first part concludes with a chapter from Alberto Rojas-Bueno, firstly describing the complex distribution landscape in the field of business events, especially when events are organised internationally. Contrary to the previous chapter, Rojas-Bueno provides an excellent case study example to explain the complexity of decision-making in business event distribution.

The second part also consists of 4 chapters and, as stated already, is devoted to one of the most researched areas of business events-events impact. However, the first chapter in the second part, "The impact of business events" by Krzysztof Celuch, omits several areas of impact of business events, such as a very broadly researched area of impact – the environmental impact. Nevertheless, the entire part 3 of the book focuses on the topic of sustainability, and thus, the reader has an opportunity to gain critical insight. Perhaps, the major contribution in the second part comes from several very rarely researched aspects of business events, such as the *social value of b2b tradeshow*s, *The importance of business events for rural women in business* and *individual attendees' value of business events*.

While chapters number 6 and 7 by Lynn McBain and Trudie Walters use strong supporting arguments for their findings and conclusions, chapter number 8 by Katrin Stefansdottir and Phil Crowther seems to be having an issue with in-text referencing as the entire chapter misses referencing and at the end of the chapter a list of references is presented without links to the chapter text. Perhaps an even more significant remark for this chapter is that it is not very clear which methods have been used to collect the statements from respondents and from which spectrum of the field of business events these respondents are sharing their perspectives

The third part focuses on business events and sustainability, and it consists of 6 chapters. It provides the reader with different areas of sustainable business events, starting from CSR to indigenous business events and their legitimacy. The chapter itself illustrates the complex and heterogeneous nature of business events and how and where business events could adopt the sustainability practice. Of course, the chapter does not give the answers to all research aspects of business events sustainability, which I believe was not the aim, but rather an overview of the complexity of these two very connected topics.

It starts with the chapter by Patcharaporn Bunlueng and Ken Butcher dedicated to the CSR principles of corporate meetings. The chapters provide a new model for the implementation of CSR practices in corporate meetings. However, the authors could have critically elaborated more on the benefits and disadvantages of this model compared to the several existing ones they already mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter number 10 by Judith Mair, “*Sustainability Developments at Conference Centres A Greener Future for Business Events*” consists of a literature review with all the major works used as supporting literature. The chapter also provides a solid case study for description and supporting arguments for the environmental perspective from the supply side perspective, in particular, venue and exhibition centres.

Ruth Dowson and Kharmen Wilson, in chapter 11, assessed the conceptual and theoretical perspectives on alternative venues, identifying the academic literature surrounding the development of this burgeoning area of provision for business events. They underlined the diversity of alternative venues and how it relates to all stakeholders. The chapter provides readers with several practical cases and strong supporting arguments from the authors. The chapter seems to lack concluding thoughts.

Chapter 12 by Ige Pirnar and Hüseyin Ozan Altin nicely describes the role of convention and visitors bureaus with a supporting cast from the Türkiye convention bureau. The chapter could benefit from the recent whitepaper from the Strategic Alliance of National Convention Bureaux of Europe entitled “The Future Role of Convention Bureaux”, especially since the authors used only one reference after the year 2000 to describe the roles of the convention bureau.

The remaining two chapters are very different and focus on two largely different topics, starting from *business events and sustainability policies*, which presents a very useful presentation of common areas of sustainable practices and selected initiatives as well as a recommendation of what an event sustainability policies should contain and sustainable event standards. This section of the book ends with a chapter devoted to *indigenous business events and organisational legitimacy*.

The fourth part, although the shortest in terms of the number of chapters (3), is probably the most solid part of the book. This part starts with smart technologies and the future of business events by Sut Ieng (Soey) Lei and Ubaldino Sequeira Couto. The authors presented very nicely the development and the early phases of the implementation of technology in business events. Moreover, the authors discussed also the challenges related to the use of ICTs in events and supported the entire chapter with an interesting case study from Macao. The chapter is a sort of state-of-the-art analysis that introduces the reader to one very important aspect of business events: ICT.

This part continues from smart technologies to technology innovation in events from Purimprach Sangkaew, Leo Jago and Alkmini Gkritzali. This chapter presents the history, current state of the art and the possible future for the technology innovation in events. The chapter is nicely organised, yet it could include critical reflections in some important areas, such as safety and privacy in the process of adoption of technological innovations. This part ends with a chapter dedicated to an overview of virtual business events by Truc H. Le and Ryan Yung. The chapter uses several case studies to support the arguments and present the lessons learned from the increasing number of virtual business events we faced in the recent past and which we will probably keep facing in the near future.

The fifth part concentrates on business events marketing and sponsorship. Chapters 18, 19 and 20 are focusing on the destination perspective. These chapters offer arguments on how destinations could benefit from business events, i.e., how to increase their competitiveness (identifying factors with strong relevance such as affecting the bidding process: bidding capacity, ambassadors' programs, word of mouth, networking and collaboration, branding, relations with media and training), how could they use business events to differentiate themselves (increasing the on focus on business events tourism which can lead to improvement in the construction of infrastructure, an increase in job opportunities, or even in the increase in tourist demand) and the role of DMOs in this process. Overall, all three chapters are solid and use adequate literature and real-world case studies as evidence to support their arguments.

The fifth part continues with an essential topic i.e. event sponsorship which is not a commonly researched area but a very significant area as it enables event planners and hosts to generate revenue. The authors identified and used a case study to present to the readers possibilities to create sponsorships and generate revenue using these techniques: Cash/financial sponsorship, Networking events sponsorship, Digital sponsorship, and Outdoor advertising sponsorship. This chapter is important because it shifts scholarly attention from sponsorships at sports events and charity-based events to business events, which is a timely contribution to both the event and marketing literature.

The final chapter in this part is related to the use of social media marketing for business events. Although it is important that this section of the book contains a chapter on social media, this chapter could be substantially improved and far better presented.

Finally, **the sixth part** focuses on business events operations. Chapters 23 and 24 concentrate on the relations and connection between hospitality and business events in general and business events and Chinese hospitality in particular. Chapter 23 by Shweta Chandra, Rohan Bhalla and Sumedha Agarwal outlines the significance of business events for hotels and provides the readers with step-by-step guidelines on how hotels should leverage business events for their goals.

The chapter by Shichun Yu, Guohong Li, Mao Mao, Wenqian Qi, Wei Fang and Jingjing Yang single out the culture as a core or rather leading characteristics followed by the security guarantee, the high professional servers and the high-profile luxury and preciseness service as the main characteristics in Chinese hospitality for business events. This is one of the rare chapters that used primary data collection as evidence and qualitative analysis for conclusions.

This part ends with two chapters dedicated to very particular and important operational areas in business events – designing and creating content and risk management. Chapter 25 by Ruth Dowson, Chantal Dickson and Simon Bell uses two illustrative case studies in this chapter to support their arguments and arguments found in the literature. They outline the “Sell and Tell” format of speech delivery, event environment and the power of perspective as the main aspects of co-creation. The chapter provides a valuable exchange model as a possibility for further development.

Chapter 26 is oriented towards risks and crises in business events, with the focus of the chapter leaning towards Convention Bureaus' perspectives. Although the authors nicely note that there is a lack of appropriate and globally accepted terminology, which affects the adequate methodology for the data collection process, especially related to terms such as risk, emergency, crisis and disaster, which are used interchangeably at times have entirely different meanings, the authors also seem to be using at times conflicting semantics when describing crises or risks or emergency situation. However, the chapter uses relevant literature and a supporting case from one of the most developed destinations for business events globally—Barcelona, to develop a comprehensive model for risk management at destinations. The added value from this chapter is both internal and external perspectives on risk management from convention bureaus.

The book is summarised with a chapter from the editor addressing future directions for business events. The editor clearly demonstrates a high level of understanding and publishing track record in the field of business events and singles out the main areas where we can expect further developments of research in the field of business events. The closing chapter outlines 5 key areas (hybrid and virtual events, business events and host destinations, business events and environmental issues, business events and the promotion of education and cultural exchange and professionalising the business events industry) for further development, which provides the reader with possible ideas for further research.

Overall, it is a very valuable and informative book for every business event professional or student interested in research in the dynamic field of business events.