



Evaluating the Development of Event Tourism: A Systematic Literature Review of Concepts, Practices, and Research Gaps

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Abstract

Event tourism has emerged as a pivotal component of contemporary tourism, contributing to economic growth, cultural exchange, and destination development. This study presents a systematic literature review (SLR) of 120 peer-reviewed articles published between 1998 and 2025, aiming to evaluate the development of event tourism, synthesize existing conceptual frameworks and practices, and identify research gaps. The review reveals that event tourism research has evolved from a primary focus on economic outcomes and mega-events to multi-dimensional perspectives encompassing social, cultural, and environmental considerations. Economic analyses remain predominant, highlighting revenue generation, employment creation, and destination competitiveness, while recent studies increasingly address social cohesion, community engagement, cultural preservation, and sustainable practices. Despite these advances, notable gaps persist, including limited research on small- and medium-scale or community-based events, underrepresentation of developing regions, and a scarcity of longitudinal studies assessing long-term impacts. Methodological diversity is evident, with quantitative approaches dominating economic evaluations and qualitative or mixed methods applied to social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Emerging areas such as digital integration, green event practices, and participatory planning offer significant opportunities for advancing both theory and practice. Based on the findings, this study emphasizes the need for inclusive, context-sensitive, and longitudinal research approaches, alongside practical strategies that integrate community participation, sustainability principles, and technological innovation. The review contributes a comprehensive synthesis of event tourism development, offering actionable insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and resilience of events as instruments of destination growth and cultural promotion.

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Introduction

Event tourism has emerged as a critical dimension of contemporary tourism studies, reflecting the dynamic interplay between cultural experiences, economic development, and destination competitiveness (Getz, 2008; Getz & Page, 2016). The growth of event tourism over the past two decades has been driven not only by the increasing demand for novel leisure experiences among tourists but also by the strategic utilization of events as tools for urban regeneration, community engagement, and destination branding (Laing, 2018; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). This field encompasses a wide range of events, including mega-sporting competitions, cultural festivals, exhibitions, and local community-based gatherings, each contributing uniquely to tourism development and regional identity (Gibson, 1998; Getz, 2012). Despite its recognized importance, event tourism research remains characterized by fragmented conceptualizations and diverse methodological approaches, highlighting the need for systematic synthesis and evaluation of existing knowledge (Getz & Page, 2016; Handyastuti, Rahayu, Dirgantari, & Yuniarisih, 2024).

Historically, event tourism was conceptualized primarily through an economic lens, emphasizing the direct and indirect financial benefits of hosting events, such as increased visitor spending, job creation, and infrastructure development (Richards, 2002; Lee, Jee, Funk, & Jordan, 2015). Early research predominantly focused on mega-events, particularly those of international scale, such as the Olympic Games and World Expositions, which were regarded as powerful catalysts for destination promotion and global visibility (Kim



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& Jamal, 2007; Stokes, 2004). While these studies underscored the economic and branding potential of events, they often neglected broader socio-cultural and environmental implications, including community participation, social cohesion, and sustainability concerns (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020; Wee, Mustapha, & Anas, 2021). As a result, an overemphasis on economic impacts has sometimes led to short-term planning and uneven benefits, limiting the effectiveness of event tourism as a tool for sustainable destination development (Pike & Page, 2014; Prastyo, 2025).

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized the multi-dimensional nature of event tourism, reflecting a shift from purely economic evaluation to integrative approaches that account for social, cultural, and environmental outcomes (Laing, 2018; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). This evolution has been driven by both theoretical advances and practical imperatives. Theoretically, scholars have highlighted the role of events in shaping community identity, facilitating cultural exchange, and fostering social capital, thereby expanding the scope of event tourism research beyond traditional economic metrics (Richards, 2002; Getz, 2012). Practically, the growing awareness of sustainable tourism principles has encouraged the adoption of environmentally responsible practices, including green event management, waste reduction strategies, and energy-efficient operations, which are increasingly considered integral to the planning and evaluation of events (Wee et al., 2021; Purwadi, 2023). Consequently, contemporary event tourism is now conceptualized as a multi-stakeholder endeavor, requiring coordinated efforts among destination managers, policymakers, event organizers, local communities, and tourists themselves (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Hongdiyanto & Homan, 2023).

Despite these advances, the literature remains fragmented, with studies varying widely in terms of theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and geographic focus (Getz, 2008; Özdiçinler, Aktaş, & Ceylan, 2021). While a considerable number of studies have examined mega-events in developed countries, research on small- and medium-scale events, particularly those in developing regions, remains limited (Sinurat, Hadiwijaya Louk, & Kuryanto, 2025; Prastyo, 2025). Similarly, longitudinal studies that track the long-term socio-economic and environmental impacts of events are scarce, constraining the ability to evaluate sustainability outcomes comprehensively (Gibson, 1998; Gössling et al., 2020). Furthermore, the diversity of event types and contexts complicates the establishment of standardized evaluation metrics, as the relative importance of economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions varies across destinations and stakeholder priorities (Lee et al., 2015; Pike & Page, 2014).

In addition to these methodological and conceptual gaps, there is a growing recognition of the need to integrate technology and digital innovation into event tourism research (Yu Ing Yap, Ayob, & Puah, 2020; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Digital platforms, social media, and data analytics are increasingly used to enhance visitor experiences, optimize event management, and support destination marketing efforts. However, systematic analyses of how these technological interventions influence both tourism outcomes and stakeholder engagement remain limited, suggesting an emerging area for future research (Laing, 2018; Handyastuti et al., 2024).

The current study addresses these gaps through a systematic literature review (SLR) aimed at synthesizing conceptual, methodological, and practical developments in event tourism. By critically examining 120 peer-reviewed articles published between 1998 and 2025, this research identifies trends, thematic clusters, and persistent limitations in the literature, providing a comprehensive foundation for advancing both theory and practice in the field (Getz & Page, 2016; Handyastuti et al., 2024). Specifically, this review seeks to: (1) evaluate predominant conceptual frameworks and theoretical underpinnings in event tourism research; (2) examine the implementation of event tourism practices across diverse geographic and contextual settings; and (3) identify research gaps and propose future directions to enhance the robustness and relevance of event tourism scholarship (Wee et al., 2021; Hongdiyanto & Homan, 2023).

By offering a systematic and integrative perspective, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of event tourism as a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon. It emphasizes the importance of balancing economic objectives with social, cultural, and environmental considerations, highlighting the potential of events to foster sustainable development and enhance destination competitiveness (Richards, 2002; Getz, 2012). Moreover, by mapping existing research gaps and methodological limitations, this review provides actionable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to optimize the planning, execution, and evaluation of events in various tourism contexts (Prastyo, 2025; Stokes, 2004).

In summary, the introduction underscores the significance of event tourism as a critical component of destination development and cultural exchange. It highlights the historical evolution from economic-focused studies toward integrative approaches that encompass social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Furthermore, it identifies methodological challenges, geographical biases, and underexplored research areas, thereby justifying the need for a systematic literature review to consolidate knowledge, assess practices, and

guide future research. By addressing these objectives, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the development of event tourism and its implications for theory, practice, and policy (Getz & Page, 2016; Laing, 2018; Zhang & Zhao, 2019).

Materials and Methods

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology to comprehensively evaluate the development of event tourism, encompassing conceptual frameworks, practical implementations, and existing research gaps. The SLR approach is particularly suited for synthesizing fragmented literature and providing a structured overview of complex, multi-dimensional phenomena such as event tourism (Handyastuti, Rahayu, Dirgantari, & Yuniarsih, 2024; Özdiçinler, Aktaş, & Ceylan, 2021). By systematically identifying, screening, and analyzing peer-reviewed studies, the research ensures transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor, which are essential for producing reliable and generalizable insights applicable to both academic inquiry and practical applications (Getz & Page, 2016; Laing, 2018).

The study follows a structured SLR framework, which involves four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis. In the identification stage, relevant academic publications were collected from leading databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering the period from 1998 to 2025. The selection of this time frame reflects the emergence and progressive evolution of event tourism as a distinct field of study, beginning with foundational works on mega-events and expanding to contemporary research emphasizing sustainability, community engagement, and destination branding (Getz, 2008; Getz, 2012; Zhang & Zhao, 2019).

To ensure the relevance and quality of the analyzed literature, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. Studies were included if they: (1) focused explicitly on event tourism, including sport events, cultural festivals, exhibitions, and community-based events; (2) were peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, or systematic reviews; (3) were published in English; and (4) were indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, ensuring scholarly credibility (Wee, Mustapha, & Anas, 2021; Hongdiyanto & Homan, 2023). Conversely, articles were excluded if they were non-peer-reviewed reports, opinion pieces, dissertations, or focused on general tourism without a clear linkage to events. This rigorous filtering process guarantees that the synthesis is based on robust, empirically grounded, and theoretically informed studies.

For each selected study, relevant data were systematically extracted and coded across several categories, including: (1) author(s) and year of publication; (2) geographical context; (3) type of event; (4) theoretical framework; (5) research methodology; (6) outcomes measured (economic, social, cultural, environmental); and (7) identified research gaps (Getz, 2008; Handyastuti et al., 2024; Özdiçinler et al., 2021). This coding process enabled the identification of patterns and trends across diverse contexts, as well as a comparative analysis of theoretical approaches and methodological rigor (Gibson, 1998; Laing, 2018).

The synthesis of the extracted data was conducted using thematic and narrative approaches, allowing for the integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings (Getz & Page, 2016; Lee, Jee, Funk, & Jordan, 2015). Thematic analysis facilitated the categorization of studies according to key dimensions of event tourism, including economic impacts, social and cultural outcomes, environmental considerations, and destination management practices (Richards, 2002; Pike & Page, 2014). Narrative synthesis was applied to trace the evolution of theoretical frameworks, identify methodological trends, and highlight persistent gaps in the literature (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Özdiçinler et al., 2021).

By adopting this multi-step, systematic approach, the study ensures a comprehensive and replicable assessment of event tourism research. Moreover, it establishes a foundation for comparing the relative contributions of different theoretical perspectives and empirical practices, thereby facilitating the identification of both strengths and limitations within the current literature (Getz, 2008; Wee et al., 2021). The methodological rigor of this SLR not only enhances the credibility of the findings but also supports evidence-based recommendations for future research and practical applications in event tourism planning and policy (Prastyo, 2025; Purwadi, 2023).

Results and Discussions

Overview of the Literature Selection

The systematic literature review (SLR) identified a total of 120 peer-reviewed studies spanning the period from 1998 to 2025, reflecting the evolution and diversification of event tourism research over the past two decades (Getz, 2008; Handyastuti, Rahayu, Dirgantari, & Yuniarsih, 2024). The geographic distribution of

the studies revealed a concentration in developed regions, particularly Europe, North America, and Australia, while research on developing regions, such as parts of Asia, Africa, and South America, remained comparatively scarce (Hongdiyanto & Homan, 2023; Prastyo, 2025). This disparity underscores an ongoing gap in understanding context-specific dynamics, particularly in community-based and small-scale events where local socio-cultural factors play a critical role (Sinurat, Hadiwijaya Louk, & Kuryanto, 2025).

The analysis further revealed that research methodologies varied considerably across studies. Quantitative approaches, such as survey-based economic impact assessments and visitor expenditure analyses, were predominant in studies focusing on mega-events (Lee, Jee, Funk, & Jordan, 2015; Gibson, 1998). Conversely, qualitative and mixed-method approaches were more common in studies emphasizing cultural, social, or environmental dimensions, often employing case studies, interviews, and participant observations to capture stakeholder perspectives (Laing, 2018; Handyastuti et al., 2024). The methodological heterogeneity reflects both the multidimensional nature of event tourism and the evolving theoretical frameworks that guide research in the field (Getz & Page, 2016; Özdiplçiner, Aktaş, & Ceylan, 2021).

Trends in Event Tourism Research

Temporal Trends

The analysis shows a progressive increase in event tourism research over the past two decades. Early studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s predominantly focused on the economic and marketing impacts of large-scale sporting and cultural events (Gibson, 1998; Kim & Jamal, 2007). For instance, studies on mega-sporting events highlighted visitor spending, infrastructure development, and media exposure as primary outcomes (Stokes, 2004; Lee et al., 2015). However, the volume and diversity of research expanded significantly after 2010, reflecting a growing interest in social, cultural, and environmental dimensions alongside traditional economic considerations (Wee, Mustapha, & Anas, 2021; Purwadi, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic further catalyzed research on event tourism, emphasizing resilience, risk management, and sustainable practices in the face of global disruptions (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). Pandemic-related studies examined the adaptation of events to health protocols, digital transformation, and hybrid or virtual formats, highlighting the field's responsiveness to emergent global challenges and the necessity for flexible and sustainable planning frameworks (Yu Ing Yap, Ayob, & Puah, 2020; Zhang & Zhao, 2019).

Thematic Trends

The thematic analysis of the literature identified four dominant research dimensions: economic impacts, social and cultural outcomes, environmental sustainability, and destination management practices (Richards, 2002; Pike & Page, 2014; Laing, 2018).

1. **Economic Impacts:** Economic outcomes remain a primary focus, particularly in studies on mega-events and festivals, where direct visitor expenditures, employment generation, and destination competitiveness are assessed (Lee et al., 2015; Sinurat et al., 2025). Economic analyses are often quantitative, employing models such as input-output analysis and travel cost methodology to estimate the financial contribution of events to local economies (Prastyo, 2025; Getz, 2008). These studies confirm that strategically planned events can stimulate regional development and contribute to broader tourism growth, although the benefits are not always equitably distributed across stakeholders (Pike & Page, 2014).
2. **Social and Cultural Outcomes:** Social and cultural impacts have gained prominence in recent research, highlighting events as platforms for community engagement, cultural preservation, and intercultural exchange (Richards, 2002; Laing, 2018). Case studies demonstrate that events can enhance local identity, foster social cohesion, and strengthen community pride, particularly when residents actively participate in event planning and execution (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Nevertheless, studies also caution that without inclusive and participatory approaches, events may produce social inequities, displacement effects, or cultural commodification, underscoring the need for context-sensitive planning (Stokes, 2004; Prastyo, 2025).

3. **Environmental Sustainability:** The growing emphasis on environmental responsibility is reflected in research on green event practices, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable resource management (Wee et al., 2021; Purwadi, 2023). While progress is evident in certain event types, particularly within the MICE sector and internationally regulated mega-events, overall adoption remains limited and inconsistent, revealing a persistent research and practice gap (Handyastuti et al., 2024). Integrating sustainability into event tourism is increasingly recognized as essential for long-term destination competitiveness, community acceptance, and alignment with global sustainability agendas (Gössling et al., 2020).
4. **Destination Management and Branding:** Event tourism research also emphasizes destination management strategies, including marketing, branding, and strategic planning to enhance attractiveness and competitiveness (Pike & Page, 2014; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Studies highlight the role of digital marketing, social media, and analytics in shaping visitor experiences and perceptions, suggesting an emerging intersection between technology, tourism management, and event planning (Yu Ing Yap, Ayob, & Puah, 2020). Integrated destination-event strategies are found to be more effective when aligned with local cultural values, economic objectives, and community expectations, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder collaboration (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Hongdiyanto & Homan, 2023).

Conceptual Development in Event Tourism

The conceptual evolution of event tourism reflects a shift from economically focused models to multi-dimensional frameworks incorporating social, cultural, and environmental perspectives (Getz, 2012; Getz & Page, 2016). Early frameworks prioritized measurable financial impacts and media exposure (Gibson, 1998; Kim & Jamal, 2007), often overlooking non-economic dimensions. Contemporary research recognizes events as complex systems involving multiple stakeholders, requiring integrated planning, impact assessment, and strategic evaluation (Özdipçiner, Aktaş, & Ceylan, 2021).

Several conceptual models have been proposed to account for this complexity. Multi-criteria frameworks assess economic, social, cultural, and environmental outcomes simultaneously, providing a holistic perspective for policymakers and practitioners (Richards, 2002; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Stakeholder-centric models emphasize participatory planning, highlighting the roles of local communities, tourism authorities, and private organizers in co-creating event value (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Laing, 2018). Furthermore, sustainability-oriented models integrate environmental considerations, advocating for green practices, resource optimization, and alignment with global sustainability goals (Wee et al., 2021; Purwadi, 2023).

Despite these advances, conceptual gaps remain. Small-scale and local events are underrepresented, limiting the applicability of existing frameworks beyond high-profile, large-scale contexts (Sinurat et al., 2025; Prastyo, 2025). Additionally, there is a scarcity of longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impacts of events on destinations, communities, and ecosystems (Gibson, 1998; Gössling et al., 2020). Addressing these gaps is critical for developing robust, context-sensitive models capable of guiding future research, policy, and practice.

Research Gaps and Emerging Areas

The systematic literature review (SLR) identifies several persistent research gaps that continue to limit the comprehensive development of event tourism scholarship. First, a clear geographic bias is evident, with the majority of empirical studies concentrated in developed countries. This imbalance results in a limited understanding of how event tourism operates in developing regions, where institutional capacity, cultural contexts, and socio-economic conditions often differ substantially (Hongdiyanto & Homan, 2023). As a consequence, existing theories and policy recommendations may lack relevance or transferability to emerging destinations, particularly in Asia, Africa, and parts of Latin America.

Second, methodological limitations remain a significant concern. Many studies rely heavily on cross-sectional designs and quantitative approaches, which, while useful for measuring economic impacts and visitor satisfaction, often fail to capture deeper social, cultural, and environmental processes (Lee et al., 2015; Wee et al., 2021). This methodological dominance restricts the ability to explore long-term effects,

community perceptions, and power relations among stakeholders. Greater use of qualitative, mixed-methods, and longitudinal research designs would allow for richer insights into how event impacts evolve over time and how they are experienced by local communities.

Third, technological integration in event tourism research remains underexplored despite its increasing relevance. Digital tools, virtual and hybrid events, big data, and social media analytics have transformed how events are planned, marketed, and evaluated, yet these innovations are still insufficiently addressed in the literature (Yu Ing Yap, Ayob, & Puah, 2020; Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Understanding the implications of technology adoption is crucial for enhancing efficiency, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Emerging research areas offer promising opportunities to address these gaps. Community-centered event studies, longitudinal assessments of socio-cultural and environmental impacts, and the integration of smart technologies in event planning and evaluation can significantly advance both theory and practice. By engaging with these areas, future research can strengthen the role of event tourism as a sustainable and effective tool for inclusive destination development (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Özdiplçiner et al., 2021).

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings provide important implications for both theory and practice within the field of event tourism. From a theoretical perspective, the study reinforces the view that event tourism is a multi-dimensional and dynamic domain rather than a single-outcome phenomenon. As emphasized by Getz and Page (2016) and Richards (2002), events simultaneously generate economic value, shape social interactions, express cultural meanings, and produce environmental consequences. This complexity requires integrative theoretical frameworks that move beyond narrowly economic evaluations and instead account for the interconnections among social cohesion, cultural identity, destination branding, and environmental sustainability. The findings also suggest that existing theories would benefit from incorporating temporal and contextual dimensions, recognizing that event impacts evolve over time and vary across destinations with different cultural and institutional settings.

From a practical standpoint, the results offer clear guidance for event organizers, destination managers, and policymakers. First, participatory planning approaches are essential to ensure that events reflect local values, address community concerns, and generate shared benefits. Engaging local stakeholders can enhance social acceptance and reduce potential conflicts. Second, the adoption of sustainable practices—such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and responsible visitor management—is increasingly critical to mitigate negative environmental impacts (Wee et al., 2021). Third, leveraging digital technologies, including data analytics, social media, and smart event platforms, can improve marketing effectiveness, visitor experience, and operational efficiency (Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Aligning event strategies with local cultural assets, economic development goals, and community expectations has been shown to maximize positive outcomes while minimizing negative externalities (Handyastuti et al., 2024; Prastyo, 2025).

In conclusion, this systematic review highlights the evolution, current practices, and persistent gaps in event tourism research. Although substantial progress has been made in understanding economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, the literature still lacks context-sensitive, multi-dimensional, and longitudinal approaches. Addressing these gaps will strengthen both theory and practice, enabling event tourism to contribute more effectively to sustainable and inclusive destination development (Getz, 2008; Laing, 2018; Gössling et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This systematic literature review has provided a comprehensive evaluation of the development of event tourism, encompassing conceptual frameworks, practical implementations, and existing research gaps. The analysis demonstrates that event tourism has evolved significantly over the past two decades, transitioning from an early focus on economic outcomes and mega-events to a multi-dimensional perspective that integrates social, cultural, and environmental considerations. Events are increasingly recognized as complex systems involving multiple stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, tourism authorities, and private organizers, which necessitates coordinated planning and strategic evaluation to achieve sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

The findings reveal that the economic impact of events remains a dominant area of research, with studies consistently highlighting contributions to local employment, revenue generation, and destination competitiveness. However, recent scholarship emphasizes that economic gains alone are insufficient to ensure sustainable development, as events also shape social cohesion, cultural identity, and environmental

sustainability. While several studies have examined these dimensions, gaps remain in understanding the long-term and context-specific impacts of events, particularly for small- and medium-scale or community-centered initiatives, and in underrepresented geographic regions.

Methodologically, the literature exhibits considerable heterogeneity, with quantitative approaches dominating economic assessments and qualitative or mixed methods more prevalent in studies exploring social, cultural, and environmental outcomes. Nevertheless, longitudinal studies and systematic evaluations of emerging practices, including the integration of digital technologies and green initiatives, remain limited. Addressing these methodological gaps is essential to develop more robust, generalizable, and actionable insights for both theory and practice.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, future research should expand its geographic scope and include developing regions and local contexts to generate more inclusive and context-sensitive knowledge. Second, researchers are encouraged to adopt longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to assess the long-term economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of events. Third, event organizers and policymakers should emphasize participatory planning, integrating community perspectives and sustainability principles into event design, management, and evaluation. Finally, the strategic utilization of digital platforms and technology can enhance visitor engagement, optimize management processes, and strengthen destination branding, providing additional pathways for sustainable growth.

Thus, event tourism is a dynamic and multi-dimensional field that offers substantial opportunities for destination development, cultural promotion, and community engagement. While significant progress has been made in understanding its various dimensions, persistent research and practice gaps highlight the need for more inclusive, context-sensitive, and longitudinal studies. By addressing these gaps and adopting integrative, stakeholder-focused, and sustainability-oriented approaches, both scholars and practitioners can enhance the effectiveness, resilience, and long-term benefits of event tourism, ultimately supporting sustainable and competitive destinations.

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