

# 4 A Model of the Evaluation Process

## Learning objectives

- Understand the major considerations in the evaluation process.
- Know the main evaluation paradigms (positivistic; interpretive; critical/emancipatory) and their implications.
- Be aware of how context influences evaluation, including formal versus informal and internal versus external.
- Understand the purposes of evaluation within event management and event tourism, including problem solving, supporting decisions and providing evidence of goal attainment.
- Learn the specific topics or problems associated with formative, process and summative evaluations.
- Differentiate between outputs and outcomes.
- Understand the uses of evaluation are not always in line with stated purpose.
- Learn how to maximise the utility of evaluation.

## 4.1 Introduction

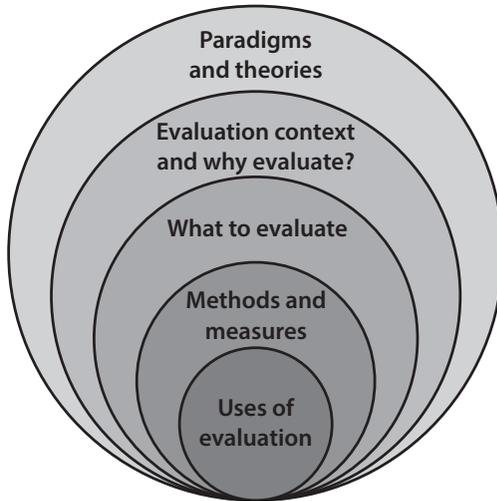
In this chapter a general model of the evaluation process is discussed, with a focus on issues and challenges for event and tourism evaluators. This is not about how to plan or design an evaluation project (the subject of the ensuing chapter) but the main things evaluators have to consider before even beginning an evaluation: paradigms and theories, the “why evaluate?” question, what to evaluate, and ultimate uses of evaluations. ‘Measures’ and ‘methods’ are illustrated in the model but are discussed more fully in the next chapter.

## 4.2 A model of the evaluation process

The diagram (Figure 4.1) provides a summary of the ensuing discussion on the major elements of the study of event evaluation. It begins with three evaluation paradigms that underpin any discussion of evaluation and apply to all applications. Most evaluations are of the routine, problem-solving kind and are low on

technical and theoretical complexity; they do not require much thought about philosophy, politics or theory. But as complexity increases, particularly when different values and stakeholder perspectives come into play – as in cost and benefit evaluation – then consideration of paradigms becomes important.

**Figure 4.1:** Major considerations in the evaluation process



### 4.3 Evaluation paradigms

*Read this section in conjunction with the previous discussion of evaluation theory.*

Paradigms can be thought of as a guiding model, and in science they are a set of concepts, theories, research methods, postulates, and standards that define legitimate research. As such, they are open to debate and preference.

The *positivist paradigm* dominates event and tourism evaluation, notably through the prevailing emphasis on measuring economic impacts, customer satisfaction, and other quantifiable outcomes. According to Rossi et al. (2004) it includes needs assessment, assessment of programme theory and process, and efficiency. When evaluators search for the truth (as in “we can prove it”) they are falling into this paradigm, whereas when they search for relevance and consensus they might be tending towards an *interpretive paradigm*.

A set of ‘interpretive’ approaches has been described by Potter (2006), and these have in common an attempt to work with stakeholders to understand their expectations, experiences and meanings before making judgment about value or worth. Close links with stakeholders and the community at large will obviously facilitate interpretive event evaluation, with specific qualitative methods including focus groups, interviews and observation. This paradigm is likely to be more appropriate in evaluating event populations, policies, and legacies, all

of which are open to various interpretations of cumulative impacts and values. Wood (2009a:183) put forward a framework for the evaluation of festival impacts that can be considered interpretive in design.

A third paradigm is that of *critical-emancipatory evaluation* (Potter, 2006) which is usually based on action research. The aim is to make changes, or initiate transformative processes, such as to employ events in community capacity building through institutional networking, or to facilitate healthy lifestyles and participation in the arts or sport. Where the aim is to empower citizens or groups, the process can be quite political and controversial, especially if existing power structures are challenged.

The *interpretive evaluation paradigm* leads to the involvement of stakeholders in the process, sometimes called '*participatory evaluation*'. The first step is to ask who wants to be involved, although if the event or agency is already actively managing its stakeholder relationships this should be automatic. Others might want to be involved, especially if they have a grievance, requiring some determination of their claims to legitimacy.

Beyond being an exercise in programme or event evaluation, wider goals might be relevant. This type of stakeholder engagement can be used in community development to empower residents or groups, thereby building capacity and hopefully support. Building networks in this way can add to mutual understanding and overall knowledge of issues. On the other hand, there will be additional time and cost requirements and the risk of failure. In some cases conflict resolution might be needed to sort out competing interests.

True collaboration will be required, because this approach asks those involved to relinquish control and seek consensus on the purpose, goals, methods and uses of the evaluation. If it works well, the evaluation or impact assessment should have a greater chance of leading to real change. In this way, it is a tool in 'action research'.

The paradigms discussed above do not directly suggest methodology or methods of evaluation. Indeed mixed methods drawing from a number of disciplines can be used no matter what the underlying philosophy.

While *methods* are used to solve problems or obtain facts and evidence, *methodology* provides the underlying rationale. Evaluators who seek to prove that an event causes a desired outcome (i.e., they want to establish cause and effect) might use an experimental method within the positivistic paradigm. Methodologies are theory and paradigm-based approaches to doing research, and they are often associated with, but not 'owned by' certain academic disciplines. In sociology, for example, both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed, and both the interpretive and positivistic paradigms have their adherents.