

EVENTS MANAGEMENT THEORY AND METHODS SERIES

VIRTUAL EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Theory and methods for event
management and tourism



TIM BROWN
CLAIRE DRAKELEY



Virtual Events Management

Tim Brown and Claire Drakeley



Goodfellow Publishers Ltd



Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,
26 Home Close, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8PS
<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: on file.

ISBN: 978-1-915097-05-7

DOI: 10.23912/978-1-915097-03-3-4967

The Events Management Theory and Methods Series

Copyright © Goodfellow Publishers Ltd., 2023

All rights reserved. The text of this publication, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, storage in an information retrieval system, or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher or under licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited. Further details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited, of Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.



Design and typesetting by P.K. McBride, www.macbride.org.uk

Cover design by Cylinder

Contents

Introduction to the Events Management Theory and Methods Series	v
Preface	vii
Editors	xi
1 From pixels to possibilities: Innovations within virtual and hybrid events	1
Tim Brown and Claire Drakeley	
<hr/>	
Part 1: Planning and Delivery of Virtual Events	
<hr/>	
2 Planning and managing a virtual event	26
Burcin Kalabay Hatipoglu and Karin Elgin-Nijhuis	
3 Considering the benefits and limitations of virtual and hybrid events	42
Dewi Jaimangal-Jones and Karen Davies	
4 Steadying the ship: Designing and delivering a hybrid conference	55
Brendon Knott and Ubaldino Couto	
5 Virtually green: Sustainability within virtual and hybrid events	70
Gozde Turktarhan	
<hr/>	
Part 2: The Virtual Event Experience	
<hr/>	
6 Is anybody there? The importance of social interactions at virtual events	86
Montira Intason	
7 Enhancing virtual event experiences through short video marketing	100
Danni Zheng, Balgen Oraltay and Zizhuo Wang	
8 The virtual event experience: Exploring the potential of Zwiift	114
Adrian Devine, Frances Devine, Amy Burns and Garry Nugent	
9 Liveness 4.0: A new paradigm for accessible performances at music festivals	126
Adrian Bossey	

Part 3: Events and the metaverse

- | | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 10 | Understanding the metaverse and its potential for events | 138 |
| | Anna Para and Nicole Stuber-Berries | |
| 11 | Events in the metaverse | 155 |
| | Jonathan Sibley and Alasdair Swenson | |
| 12 | Metaverse events: Experiences, engagement and sustainability | 175 |
| | Shellie Kark and Smita Singh | |
| 13 | Events and the metaverse: A DARQ Future? | 192 |
| | Matt Frew, Theofilos Tzanidis and Jenny Flinn | |
-

Part 4: Future Developments for Events

- | | | |
|-----------|--|------------|
| 14 | The future of the events industry | 209 |
| | Peter Vlachos | |
| 15 | Lessons learned and looking ahead: The potential of virtual and hybrid events | 228 |
| | Tim Brown and Claire Drakeley | |
| | Index | 239 |

Introduction to the Events Management Theory and Methods Series

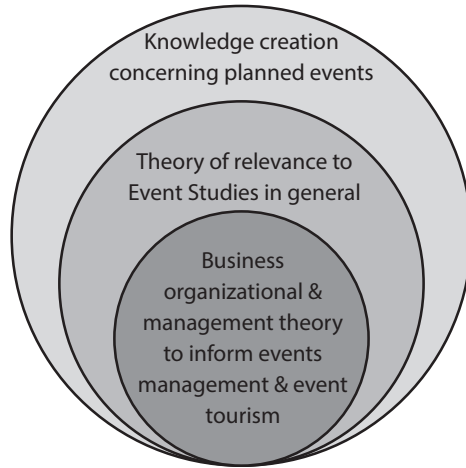
Event management as a field of study and professional practice has its textbooks with plenty of models and advice, a body of knowledge (EMBOK), competency standards (MBECS) and professional associations with their codes of conduct. But to what extent is it truly an applied management field? In other words, where is the management theory in event management, how is it being used, and what are the practical applications?

Event tourism is a related field, one that is defined by the roles events play in tourism and economic development. The primary consideration has always been economic, although increasingly events and managed event portfolios meet more diverse goals for cities and countries. While the economic aspects have been well developed, especially economic impact assessment and forecasting, the application of management theory to event tourism has not received adequate attention.

In this book series we launch a process of examining the extent to which mainstream theory is being employed to develop event-specific theory, and to influence the practice of event management and event tourism. This is a very big task, as there are numerous possible theories, models and concepts, and virtually unlimited advice available on the management of firms, small and family businesses, government agencies and not-for-profits. Inevitably, we will have to be selective.

The starting point is theory. Scientific theory must both explain a phenomenon, and be able to predict what will happen. Experiments are the dominant form of classical theory development. But for management, predictive capabilities are usually lacking; it might be wiser to speak of theory in development, or theory fragments. It is often the process of theory development that marks research in management, including the testing of hypotheses and the formulation of propositions. Models, frameworks, concepts and sets of propositions are all part of this development.

The diagram illustrates this approach. All knowledge creation has potential application to management, as does theory from any discipline or field. The critical factor for this series is how the theory and related methods can be applied. In the core of this diagram are management and business theories which are the most directly pertinent, and they are often derived from foundation disciplines.



All the books in this series will be relatively short, and similarly structured. They are designed to be used by teachers who need theoretical foundations and case studies for their classes, by students in need of reference works, by professionals wanting increased understanding alongside practical methods, and by agencies or associations that want their members and stakeholders to have access to a library of valuable resources. The nature of the series is that as it grows, components can be assembled by request. That is, users can order a book or collection of chapters to exactly suit their needs.

All the books will introduce the theory, show how it is being used in the events sector through a literature review, incorporate examples and case studies written by researchers and/or practitioners, and contain methods that can be used effectively in the real world.

Preface

Virtual and hybrid events first came to international prominence in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in an unprecedented and sudden global closure of events (among many other industries). In order to safeguard against significant financial losses, and to maintain social connectivity, event professionals pivoted many events to a virtual format. This was aided by a plethora of readily available digital platforms and technical capabilities of event organisers and, more importantly, attendees, resulting in this sudden transition to virtual being more successful than originally envisioned. It was not without its challenges, however, with many virtual event failures highlighted during the early months of the pandemic. These were often due to user errors, such as inappropriate comments being broadcast, inability to use the platforms being adopted, or more often a lack of awareness of cameras being on resulting in attendees being seen in compromising situations and or a lack of appropriate clothing!

Fortunately, the event industry, and event attendees, have developed rapidly during and post-Covid, resulting in virtual and hybrid events being viewed as significant future components of the events industry. It is worth noting, however, that both virtual and hybrid events are not new and have in fact been in use for several decades. It was the onset of Covid that has shifted the focus for the potential of virtual and hybrid events and changed the appetite for many consumers regarding how they engage with some event sectors, particularly meetings and conferences.

This book has therefore evolved from our own collective experiences and reflections on creating and managing events, teaching about events, and the recent technological evolution of events. This book aims to help event professionals and students (both current and aspiring) to understand what virtual and hybrid events are, how they can be designed and managed, how they can be created to enhance the event experience, and how to reduce the likelihood of failure, as well as the potential future directions of events.

Virtual Events Management is a unique text in that it is the first academic textbook to examine events from an 'online' perspective and the various connotations of this – virtual, hybrid, augmented and virtual realities, and more recently within the metaverse. Currently there is still limited scholarship regarding virtual events, as the overwhelming extent of the literature focuses on the creation, design, planning, managing and evaluation of traditional live/in-person events. So, this book is designed to build knowledge, enhance management learning, and develop practitioner / academic expertise from a virtual, hybrid and metaverse perspective.

Whilst the event industry has evolved rapidly in the last 30 years, with a subsequent growth of education and professionalism, there are still gaps emerging regarding knowledge and skills for managing events and event experiences. The rapid technological advances within events that have emerged due to Covid (a benefit of sorts) are not without their challenges and having a technically minded and capable workforce is critical to the future of the industry as a whole. With that

in mind, this book particularly considers:

- ◆ What are virtual and hybrid events?
- ◆ How can we make virtual event experiences meaningful and engaging?
- ◆ What are the benefits of virtual events?
- ◆ What are the challenges of virtual events?
- ◆ What is the metaverse and what role will this play in the future of events?

This book has been written for events industry practitioners, and for lecturers and students on events management, hospitality, leisure management, marketing, digital marketing, or tourism management courses. Each chapter is designed to explore different aspects of virtual events and how we can develop our knowledge and understanding to enable us to create positive event experiences within this new virtual arena. The case studies represent a broad international mix, including examples from the United Kingdom, South Africa, United States of America, China, Ireland, and Thailand, as well as via the metaverse.

We have ordered the chapters in relation to four key themes:

- ◆ The planning and delivery of virtual events.
- ◆ The virtual event experience.
- ◆ Events and the metaverse.
- ◆ The future developments for events.

Each chapter provides a detailed explanation of a selected event case study, which is aligned to virtual, hybrid and or metaverse events. It then identifies what can be learned from the case study and suggests how this learning can be applied, in order to better manage future virtual, hybrid or metaverse events. This structure also offers a framework which can help academics and students relate the case studies to recognised event concepts, including the designing, planning, and management of events. This approach should be useful to event practitioners seeking insights into problems they may be facing at specific stages of the virtual or hybrid planning process.

The first chapter – *From pixels to possibilities: Innovations within virtual and hybrid events* – examines how virtual and hybrid events have evolved, their historical context, and the significance of Covid-19 pandemic in generating innovation within the events sector. Key definitions and concepts are outlined to aid the reader. This chapter sets the scene for the thirteen case study orientated chapters which follow.

Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 fit under the remit of ‘planning and delivery of virtual events’, with a focus on practical methods for creating virtual events.

Chapter 2 – *Planning and managing a virtual event* – provides insights into how to develop and manage a virtual event, and presents a new model of virtual event planning, which is applied to the case study of the Heritage & Slow Tourism LAB.

Chapter 3 – *Considering the benefits and limitations of hybrid and virtual events* – explores the various benefits of utilising virtual and hybrid events, as well as considering many of the barriers and challenges that exist.

Chapter 4 – *Steadying the ship: Designing and delivering a hybrid conference in unchartered waters* – considers the challenges and opportunities of creating virtual and hybrid conferences. The chapter examines the ICE 2021 conference as a case study in developing best practice for hybrid conferences.

Chapter 5 – *Virtually green: Sustainability within virtual and hybrid events* – investigates the importance of sustainability practices and approaches within virtual and hybrid events and highlights sustainable methods which event professionals can employ.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 are associated with creating and enhancing the ‘event experience’ from a virtual and hybrid perspective.

Chapter 6 – *Is anybody there? The importance of social interactions at virtual events* – examines the importance of developing social interaction opportunities at events and explores this through a new framework for different types of interactions at virtual conferences.

Chapter 7 – *Enhancing virtual event experiences through short video marketing* – evaluates how the use of short video marketing (such as via TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, etc) is providing opportunities for event professionals to connect with virtual event attendees and enhance the overall user experience. The case study examines the Dubai World Expo 2020 and its implications for event professionals.

Chapter 8 – *The virtual event experience: exploring the potential of Zwift!* – explores the development of immersive experiences within virtual events. The case study examines how the Zwift platform evolved during Covid as a way to encourage cyclists to continue participating in virtual events and competitions, and the benefits and challenges that this posed.

Chapter 9 – *Liveness 4.0: a new paradigm for accessible performances at music festivals* – assesses the use of technology in creating accessible events and festivals for all, with a particular focus on attendees that are deaf or disabled. The case study focuses on the Beat Blocks multi-sensory interactive haptic flooring system at a festival and its potential for enhancing accessibility at music festivals.

Chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13 explore the relatively new technological landscape of the ‘metaverse’, and the potential for events within this new virtual space.

Chapter 10 – *Understanding the metaverse and its potential for events* – highlights the significant potential that the metaverse poses for events, and outlines its key characteristics and, most crucially, the architecture of the metaverse. The case study reviews the Metaverse Music Festival from the perspective of one of the stage creators, providing insights into the design of metaverse events.

Chapter 11 – *Events in the metaverse* – considers the theoretical concepts pertaining to immersive events experiences and how this relates to the virtual event environments emerging via the metaverse. The case study examines the planning and delivery of a hybrid event at the South by South-West Music Festival and its potential for future events.

Chapter 12 – *Metaverse events: Experiences, engagement, and sustainability* – examines the three key perspectives of event experiences, attendee engagement,

and sustainability and how the metaverse can capitalise on this within the MEEC (Meeting, Events, Expositions and Conventions) Industry.

Chapter 13 – *Events and the metaverse: A DARQ Future?* – explores the fourth industrial revolution (4iR) and the transformational DARQ (Distributed ledger systems, Artificial intelligence, virtual, augmented, mixed to extended Reality, and Quantum computing) technologies that are underpinning the acceleration in the metaverse, as well as the Five Spaces of Events.

Chapter 14 – *The future of the events industry* – surveys the potential future directions of the events industry and how technology will continue to develop as a central aspect of events and experiences in the future, and the implications this may have for the industry, students, and academics, as well as event professionals.

Finally, Chapter 15 examines the key concepts and themes that have emerged across the chapters within the book and posits some potential future developments for events as well as opportunities for future research.

Through exploring and examining virtual and hybrid events, as well as the metaverse potential, we hope that those engaged with events will appreciate the value in learning from these emerging fields, in order to better develop practice, and most critically to enhance the event experience.

Tim Brown and Claire Drakeley

Who is this book for?

- ◆ Event professionals who are keen to develop best practice in creating virtual, hybrid and metaverse events.
- ◆ Students of event management who are preparing for a career in events or related industries.
- ◆ Local, regional, or national Government departments involved in developing and managing events.
- ◆ Venue management teams interested in developing and delivering virtual, hybrid and metaverse events.
- ◆ Event production companies involved in developing and delivering virtual, hybrid and metaverse events.
- ◆ Trainers, teachers, and lecturers in the fields of events management, tourism, hospitality, marketing, or digital marketing.
- ◆ Academics and researchers exploring the theoretical underpinning and application of technology in events, tourism, hospitality, as well as marketing and digital marketing.
- ◆ Readers interested in the application of theory to their everyday world.

Editors

Dr Tim Brown is Programme Leader for Events Management at Chester Business School and since 2009 has taught subjects ranging from events operations, logistics of events, and event fundraising.

Tim has over 15 years of experience working in the events industry and continues to consult and oversee major events. During Tim's time in the industry, he has delivered hundreds of events regionally, nationally, and internationally. The events he has been involved with range from large-scale conferences, dinners, and award ceremonies to hospitality and charitable events. Some of the biggest events he has delivered include high-profile projects such as the hospitality for the Opening of Capital of Culture, Boodles Nations Cup Tennis, Annual Tourism Awards, MIPIM in Cannes, and the corporate hospitality for 1,500 people at the Paul McCartney 'Liverpool Sound' Concert.

Tim completed his PhD in 2018 and his research focused on charity fundraising events. His research areas include: Event planning; Event marketing and promotion; Charity fundraising events; Event evaluation; Event budgeting; Event safety; Event creativity; and Virtual events.

Claire Drakeley is Programme Leader for the BA (Hons) Events Management courses at the University of Northampton and Deputy Head of Subject for Events, Tourism & Hospitality. She is a published author and consultant specialising in risk management, contemporary issues, decision making, experience design and business strategy.

Prior to joining the University, Claire was Head of Enterprises & Events for English National Ballet. In 2007, Claire founded Mackerel Sky Events, a creative events agency based in the Southwest, delivering a vast range of event projects including Agile on the Beach, City of Lights and Bloodhound SSC. Outside of academia, Claire is co-owner of professional ice hockey team, MK Lightning, having rescued the team in 2019. She also developed and now shares the practice of 80% Awesome, applying Agile principles to real life to find some calm in the chaos!

Claire holds a BSc (Hons) Mathematics and an MBA and is working on several research projects around Agile event management practice and applied game theory, including her PhD exploring high pressure decision making within event production.

Contributors

Adrian Bossey is Head of Business & Experience Design at the Cornwall Business School, Falmouth University. He is a former artist manager whose clients included Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine, Chumbawumba, Drugstore, My Life Story and The Senseless Things. Adrian worked on 15 UK top forty albums and managed the main stage headline act at Glastonbury Festival (1992). He has worked in academia for 20 years, leading a range of successful bids, including for the RELAYS Cultural Olympiad Project, and was Chair of the Southwest Music Industry Forum. He is a Trustee of Attitude is Everything and his research interests include: accessibility, authenticity, liveness and sustainability at music festivals.

Dr Amy Burns is a Course Director for the BSc Consumer Management and Food Innovation programme and Director of the Food and Consumer Testing Suite in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ulster Business School. Amy's particular areas of expertise include product innovation and new product development, nutritional evaluation, the sensory evaluation of food and drink products and both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Amy is one of 10 members of the Sensory Network Ireland Group that is promoting integration and ensuring sustainability for all sensory science activities on the island of Ireland and abroad.

Dr Ubaldino Couto is an assistant professor in events management at the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, China. He read his PhD in festivals and events at Leeds Beckett University in the United Kingdom, exploring the role of diaspora festivals in social inclusion. Ubaldino is interested in research related to cultural festivals, sport events and the meetings industry.

Dr Karen Davies is a senior lecturer in Events Management, in the Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management at Cardiff Business School. Karen's research interests include festivals and cultural events, equity, diversity inclusion and social justice and events for social change. Karen has previously worked in events management with Swansea Council running a variety of indoor and outdoor events.

Dr Adrian Devine is Course Director for the BSc (Hons) Event Management in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ulster Business School. Adrian has been involved in the planning of a number of high profile international events such as the World Police & Fire Games 2013. At local level he has been an adviser to some of Northern Ireland's largest home grown events including the Super Cup NI and he also works closely with Special Olympics Ireland. Recently Adrian collaborated with the NI Commonwealth Games event team as they prepared to host the 2021 Youth Commonwealth Games.

Frances Devine is Course Director for the MSc International Event Management, in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ulster Business School. Her key areas of teaching are managerial studies, leadership and business performance. Frances is actively involved in researching new trends in human resource management in the hospitality and tourism sector, presently focusing on cultural diversity training.

Dr Jenny Flinn is a lecturer in Events Marketing in the, School of Business and Creative Industries at University of the West of Scotland. She is an experienced academic having worked in the area of events management education for over 15 years and has led programmes at both Undergraduate and Postgraduate level. Jenny's research interests lie in the area of festivals and events with a particular focus in the experiential aspects of events, community impacts of events and safety/security for events. Jenny has been a member of the Executive Board of the Association for Events Management Education since 2009.

Dr Matt Frew is a senior lecturer in Enterprise and Transformational Technology at the University of the West of Scotland. A Future Studies social theorist

Matt specialises in how phenomena and trends in transformational DARQ technologies and an accelerating metaverse are challenging and changing how we work, learn and live. With over 20 years experience, Matt has worked across many fields including sport, health, fashion, events and festivity. Matt's work focuses on how DARQ technologies and the metaverse are revolutionising the structuring relations of space, time and subjectivity. He argues that we are witnessing a trans-human shift where DARQ technologies and the metaverse will become embodied givens as they are woven in and through the fabric of our life. Moreover, our conceptions of 'reality' will be questioned as our physical world and biological self, increasingly bridge and blur with that of our digital world and synthetic self. We are accelerating towards DARQ dreamscapes where sensory saturating ecosystems of extended reality will not only allow us to reimagine the future, but also enable us to synthetically resurrect and relive the past.

Dr Burçin Hatipoğlu worked as a full-time faculty member at Tourism Administration Department, Bogazici University, Istanbul, between 2006-2020, leading courses on management and sustainability. In the last 15 years, Burçin has been involved in several sustainable development projects, consulted government and industry organizations, and published various articles on sustainable tourism, education for sustainability, and sustainable development. Burçin is the co-founder of Heritage & Slow TourismLab. Burçin is a visiting fellow at the School of Business, Canberra, and Industrial Relations Research Group (IRRG), UNSW.

Dr Montira Intason is an experienced lecturer in Tourism, in the Department of Tourism at Naresuan University, Thailand. Montira has a PhD in Tourism from the University of Otago, New Zealand. Montira's research interests include: event management; MICE tourism; cultural festivals; cultural tourism; sustainable tourism; and innovative event practices

Dr Dewi Jaimangal-Jones is Principal Lecturer in Events Management, in the Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management at Cardiff Business School. Dewi is an active member of the Association for Events Management Education, a Higher Education Academy National Teaching Fellow and an accredited PM4SD trainer. Recent research projects include evaluating the economic impacts of hosting the Volvo Ocean Race Cardiff Stopover in July 2018 and the economic impact evaluation of the UEFA Champions League Finals 2017 on behalf of the Welsh Government Major Events Unit. Dewi has also worked with the Quality Assurance Agency as a subject specialist on the 2015-2016 review of the subject benchmark statements for events, hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism.

Shellie Kark is the programme manager of the Meeting and Events Incentive Program for the School of Hospitality at Metropolitan State University of Denver. In addition, Shellie serves on the Culinary Council of Sterling Rice Group where she innovates and creates new product lines for the food and beverage industry. She is the co-founder of KitchenCUE™, a series of videos that teach the fundamentals of food preparation and presentation through a simple, step-based approach. The KitchenCUE™ methodology has been utilized as a foundation for the development of an array of culinary programmes spanning across diverse populations and has national recognition in a variety of publications, including *O Magazine*.

Prof. Brendon Knott is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Sport Business and Technology Research, in the Sport Management Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town, South Africa. He currently lectures and conducts research into aspects of sport business, sport events and sport tourism, with his particular areas of expertise related to place branding and mega-event legacy. He serves as a Regional Editor for *Event Management* and co-edited the Routledge book, *Sport and Development in Emerging Nations* (2021).

Karin Elgin Nijhuis is the owner of advisory firm Elgin & Co., co-founder and organizer of the Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality, International Conference (HTHIC) and the Heritage & Slow TourismLAB, and associate consultant in TEAM Tourism Consulting. Karin specializes in narrative communication for strategy development, branding, visitor experience development and stakeholder engagement. Karin works with destinations and organizations in the field of tourism and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Karin holds an MA in Ancient History from Utrecht University, and an MSc in Corporate Communications from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

Garry Nugent is a leading events professional with an expertise in sporting events, including cycling events, and supported Cycling Ireland for over 7 years. He has been involved in organising a number of prestigious international events such as the Giro d'Italia Grand Depart 2014 and is currently the event director of the Great Dublin Bike Ride.

Balgen Oraltay is an undergraduate student in the Department of Tourism at Fudan University, China. Her research interests include digital marketing, virtual reality experiences and Gen Z tourism behaviours.

Dr Anna Para is a senior research associate at the Institute of Tourism and Mobility at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Switzerland). Her main research interests include use of data and new technologies in tourism. She is currently involved in research projects related to the use of data in tourism, the potential role of the metaverse and the use of virtual influencers in tourism. Before joining academia, Anna gathered her professional experience in the tourism industry and in consulting.

Jonathan Sibley is an experienced senior lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University with a history of working in the global higher education industry, delivering educational programmes in Qatar in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and in Barcelona supporting destination management professionals. He also lectures on Event Management at Modul University in Vienna. At Manchester Met he is responsible for the Event Operations and Production theme, which runs through the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as supporting the Events Connect Initiative, which includes the provision of a conference and of volunteering and mentoring programmes designed to facilitate industry engagement for students studying Events Management. Jonathan is passionate about working closely with events industry partners to enhance student outcomes and in collaboration with industry professionals he established the REACH Events Management Scholarship, which aims to increase the representation of young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds within the events industry.

Dr. Smita Singh works as an assistant professor in the School of Hospitality at Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado. She completed her MBA in marketing management from India and graduated with her Ph.D. in Hospitality management from Iowa State University in 2022. She has seven years of industry experience from India in the events field and has participated in numerous international trade shows and exhibitions across Asian countries. Her research interests include smart event/technology, event marketing, and consumer behaviour and psychology, and she has published and presented several journal articles and book chapters at international academic and industry conferences.

Dr Nicole Stuber-Berries is the Co-Head of Competence Center for Tourism and lecturer at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Switzerland). Her areas of expertise are data and digitalisation in tourism; (digital) business and operating models; operational excellence and efficiency; scenario analyses, innovation management and growth strategies, adaptation processes and transformations, especially considering the next generation of innovative technologies. As a lecturer, she teaches undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students and shares her knowledge in tailor-made workshops for companies.

Alasdair Swenson is a creative technologist and researcher whose projects push the boundaries of interactive and immersive technology in Unreal Engine and Virtual Production. His work has been shown at Manchester People's History Museum, Imperial War Museum North, galleries and festivals. As well as exhibiting his own work, he has collaborated with a number of well-known organisations including Soup Collective developing innovative interaction for public facing media installations such as at the launch of MediaCityUK. Alasdair is a member of the Creative AR&VR hub at Manchester Metropolitan University where he has developed technical solutions for multidisciplinary immersive research and installations. Alasdair leads the Future Media Production BA (Hons) in the School of Digital Arts, with a curriculum focused on how to discover and tell new stories with emerging technologies.

Dr Gozde Turktarhan is a lecturer at Chester Business School. After working at many hotels during her bachelor's education, she continued her career in academia. She completed her doctorate degree in the area of destination marketing in 2019, then went to the University of South Florida for her post-doctorate research with the support of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey between 2020-2022. Her research interests are destination marketing, smart destinations, and tourism technologies. She serves as an assistant editor for social media of the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* and an assistant editor of the *Journal of Global Business Insights*. She records audio books for blind and low-vision people as a volunteer.

Theo Tzanidis is a senior lecturer in Digital Communications at the University of the West of Scotland. Theo leverages his expertise in integrating new communication technologies and platforms, as well as utilizing real-time data for managing growth campaigns. This expertise formed the foundation for his engagement with emerging technologies in the digital business transformation sector, such as #RealityTechnologies and #AI for Business. Currently, Theo is focusing on digital transformation projects, specifically directing his efforts towards metaverse and

Web3 business projects. These projects aim to cultivate new business competencies in the realms of 3DWeb and Communication automation, all powered by AI.

Dr Peter Vlachos is a Principal Lecturer in the School of Marketing and Management at the University of Greenwich. Peter's expertise focuses on the experience economy and its impacts on urban development. His research examines how the live arts and entertainment industries, and the creative and leisure sectors more broadly, can influence place branding, labour mobility, and local and regional economic diversification. Peter read Political Science (BA, MA) at the University of Toronto and previously taught on the MA Cultural Policy and Management at City University, London. His PhD research entitled "From lumber to leisure" examined post-industrial place rebranding in small cities. He joined the University of Greenwich in 2007, whereupon he established, led, and continues to teach on the MA International Events Management. Peter also holds lead responsibility for transnational educational partnerships for the School of Marketing and Management.

Zizhuo Wang is an undergraduate student in the Department of Tourism at Fudan University, China. Her research interests include digital cultural tourism, rural tourism, and destination management.

Dr. Danni Zheng is an assistant professor in the Department of Tourism at Fudan University, China. Danni was listed as one of the "Top 40 Young Researchers" in Australia (Rising Stars on the Early Achievers Leaderboard) in 2020 and the "Shanghai Pujiang Talent" in China in 2022. Danni is a member of Travel and Tourism Research Association and Global Sub-Optimal Health Research Association. Danni received her PhD in Tourism in 2019 from the School of Business at The University of Queensland, Australia which was granted the "Best PhD Thesis Award". Danni's research examines wellness tourism, medical tourism, digital cultural tourism, metaverse tourism, prosocial behaviours, events management, and crisis management.