



Network-based strategy making for events tourism

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Abstract

Purpose – Seeks to understand the inter-organisational networks that influence events tourism strategy making by public-sector event development agencies in Australia.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative methodology of convergent interviews, followed by multiple case research across six Australian states and territories, was employed. The inter-organisational relationships and networks of events agencies that impact on their strategy processes for events tourism were the “cases” in focus.

Findings – Strategies of a reactive-proactive nature mostly guide events tourism development by Australia’s corporatised event development agencies. These agencies maintain “soft”, loosely formed networks that consist of relatively stable clusters of intra-governmental and corporate membership with a peripheral, *ad hoc* membership of other stakeholders.

Research limitations/implications – Although the paper studies perceptions of strategy making at a single point in time, it provides valuable insights into the public sector environment, institutional settings and key relationships that impact on events tourism strategies.

Practical implications – Event development agencies should consider how the unique requirements of event bidding, event development and expansion might facilitate different types of stakeholder engagement and network formation. Integration of regional, metropolitan and state strategies for events tourism may also widen the network of influence on strategies.

Originality/value – The paper informs public sector operatives establishing or managing event development agencies, where tourist generation is a primary marketing goal. It contributes new knowledge in a tourism field that is under-researched.

Keywords Tourism management, Management strategy, Networking, Australia

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The spotlight on inter-organisational relationships and networks has focused attention on new governance structures to stimulate product innovation and supply chain enhancement (Snow and Miles, 1992), but it has also prompted interest in how networks contribute to strategy formation (Gulati *et al.*, 2000; Dyer and Singh, 1998). In industrial contexts like tourism where major attractions include special events, multiple sets of stakeholders, some within their own organized networks, influence strategy. For this reason, inter-organisational relationships, including network structures, are gaining the attention of tourism researchers (Selin *et al.*, 2000; Tremblay, 2000; Bramwell and Lane, 2000a).

Moving beyond the traditional planning perspective, tourism strategies can be linked to the resource-based theory of the firm (Ahuja, 2000; Peteraf, 1990; Wernerfelt, 1984) evidenced by the packaging of tourism assets to stimulate demand, the knowledge-based perspective (e.g. Grant, 1996; Andersson and Dahlgqvist, 2001) where



strategies emerge through shared learning (e.g. Boucken and Sungsoo, 2002), and more recently the network model of relationships that impacts on strategy (Axelsson, 1995; Ford, 1990; Hakansson, 1992; Hakansson and Johanson, 1992). Interestingly, tourism researchers have only just begun to acknowledge strategy models beyond the planning paradigm (e.g. Leiper, 1997; Athiyaman, 1995; Selin, 2000), although research about network-based tourism development is growing (Petrillo and Swarbrooke, 2004). In the high-growth arena of events tourism discussed in this paper, there is no known empirical research about strategy and the role of networks in its creation.

Major events and festivals with tourist appeal are now widely featured in the marketing strategies of different nations (Mules, 1998; Gnoth and Anwar, 2000; Ritchie and Ju, 1987). Consequently, events tourism is an established phenomena described from the supply-side perspective as “the systematic development and marketing of events as tourism attractions” (Getz, 1991, 1997a), a definition that, in itself, implies a strategic approach. Relational models of strategic management that help to understand how events tourism strategies can be jointly determined by public, private and community stakeholders include the interaction network approach of dyadic relationships (Hakansson, 1982; Ford, 1980; Moller and Wilson, 1995) and its successor, the network model (e.g. Axelsson and Easton, 1992; Easton, 1992; Ford, 1990). However, the interaction network model of cooperative, dyadic relationships mostly describes simple relationships such as that between a major event organizer and a tourism authority. It does not capture the wider stakeholder network that may facilitate and depend upon the tourism potential of events. Thus, network theories underpin this paper’s investigation of inter-organisational relationships (IORs) that drive public-sector strategy making for events tourism in Australia. Given the multiple perspectives on strategy (Mintzberg, 1994), events tourism strategies are defined here as “the strategic positions or approaches to events tourism development and marketing that are derived from prescriptive or descriptive strategy processes or an amalgam of them” (Stokes, 2004, p. 43).

While the influence of networks on public event management and marketing has been highlighted previously in this journal (Erickson and Kushner, 1999), insights to network structures that shape events tourism strategies at the macro-level of a state or nation are also of benefit to marketers and policy makers. To investigate events tourism networks, this paper addresses the three related questions of:

- (1) “How and why does the public sector environment of events development agencies impact upon their IORs for events tourism strategy making?”
- (2) “How do events agencies interpret strategy?”
- (3) “What are the forms and characteristics of their IORs for shaping events tourism strategies?”

This Australian research has implications for other nations and states where public-sector agencies guide events development and marketing. In Europe, as in Southern hemisphere nations like Australia and New Zealand, various countries and cities have established events development agencies (e.g. EventScotland and Event Denmark). Many local government authorities also house event development personnel (e.g. Belfast City Council in Northern Ireland).

To set the scene for an investigation of events tourism strategy making, this paper first examines the public-sector institutional environment for events tourism including

interpretations of the policy-strategy linkage, and several theoretical perspectives on networks that guide the study. Beyond theory building, the findings of this Australian study inform both Northern and Southern hemisphere practitioners who are establishing decision-making structures and strategies for events tourism.

Public sector environment for events tourism strategies

The public sector environment for events tourism strategies at national or state levels may be impacted by tourism policy-strategy relationships, agency interpretations of strategy, organisational arrangements that forge links between events and tourism, and government motives for investing in events, to cite just a few influences. At the macro-level, the need for an events tourism policy to precede strategy has been suggested (Getz, 1997b; Gnoth and Anwar, 2000). However, there is no clear consensus about the separation or interdependence of policies for tourism overall and tourism strategies. A case in point is Brent-Ritchie and Crouch's (2000) model of destination competitiveness that includes strategy within tourism policy. Here, policy embraces regulations, rules, guidelines and directives as well as tourism objectives and strategies that guide marketing decision-making within tourism destinations. Yet, policy-making and strategy-making are not always engaged in by the same sets of stakeholders, and there is not always a sequential relationship between them. In some Australian states, tourism policy formulation has occurred to support already defined strategies. In other states, a policy has facilitated strategy and in some cases, there has been no policy at all. Thus, there is an apparent need to define strategy as an inter-related but separate concept to tourism policy (Wahab and Pigram, 1997). Any lack of clarity about this policy-strategy relationship could well affect the formality of strategy making models adopted by government-funded events agencies.

Apart from the policy-strategy relationship, there is some confusion about the nature of strategy itself within tourism and insufficient debate or comments about strategy making for events tourism (Getz, 1997a). Strategy is often used as nomenclature by public sector bodies to describe tourism development and/or marketing plans, and the focus of events tourism strategies is not dissimilar, albeit directed towards developing events and festivals with tourism potential. Traditionally, the formal planning strategy perspective has dominated tourism research (e.g. Heath and Wall, 1992; Papadopoulos, 1989). Yet the contingency view that strategies of tourism bodies are dependent on environmental, organisational and/or managerial characteristics is gaining ground (e.g. Hall, 1998, 2000; Soteriou and Roberts, 1998) with an expanding body of knowledge about collaborative and adaptive approaches (Bramwell and Lane, 2000b). Just how these emerging strategy perspectives are being adopted in the tourism sector has only begun to be explored (Selin, 2000; Selin *et al.*, 2000; Treuren and Lane, 2003; Tremblay, 2000) and in turn, strategic processes for events tourism remain developmental (Getz, 1991, 1997a; Gnoth and Anwar, 2000).

Like other areas of government investment, events development and the institutional structures that drive it have been affected by corporatization of the public sector or "the hollowing out of the state" (Milward, 1996). For tourism overall, a growing emphasis on partnerships, an expansion of tourism products/services, more refined market segmentation and fast growing technologies have spawned more public-private sector tourism strategies than government-driven strategies (Goymen, 2000). Events represent a sub-set of tourism where independent event promoters and

companies co-exist alongside community event organizers, but the capital required to attract major events continues to provide a strong justification for public sector leadership.

In Australia, most states and territories demonstrate a commitment to events tourism development with institutionalized agencies that acquire and promote major events. The federal government has an umbrella framework for events tourism development, but states and territories shape their own strategies and compete aggressively for events on the national and world stage. Not unlike many policy domains, there has been some fragmentation of tourism development and marketing into different organisational structures, and hence some coordination problems do occur. Some Australian states and territories have opted to establish events development agencies within tourism marketing authorities in a similar way to the creation of Event Denmark by the Danish Tourism Board. Certainly this approach has enabled nations like Denmark to approach events tourism development separately from tourism in general (Allen *et al.*, 2005). However, in various Australian states, events corporations have been created to act as commercially driven bodies outside of tourism authorities to attract major sports or arts events (Mules, 1998). In particular states such as Victoria, different types of events are managed by the events corporation and the government's tourism department.

Major sports events tend to be the primary focus of strategies of events corporations in Australia, and there has been a call for a greater understanding of the networks that drive sports event growth in particular (Department of Industry Science and Resources, 2000). Nevertheless, governments do not influence the development of all events and may not have any influence on a number of grassroots events and festivals at regional level. Also, it is not logical that all events will attract sufficient tourist visitation to be included in events tourism strategies of a city, state or nation. Consequently, any discussion of events tourism can only embrace events and festivals with the capacity to generate significant tourism demand.

Alongside government policies and agency interpretations of strategy, the governance structures for events tourism strategy are often tied to public sector motives for investing in events. These include economic benefits derived from increased tourist visitation and expenditure, media coverage that enhances the image of a host city or nation and, to a lesser extent, social benefits including the "feel good" factor in the community (Getz, 1997a, 1999). In Australian states where corporatised agencies exist outside government departments to foster events tourism, the economic goals of events tourism have generally assumed greater priority (Mules, 1998). In these agencies, there is an increased likelihood that managers' perceptions of their mandate to attract events prompt the selection of events on dollar-driven criteria. However, emphasis may be placed on overall economic development rather than tourism as a specific sector. Inside government departments, public servants often have a heightened sense of accountability to senior bureaucrats, government ministers and the electorate. Thus, more diverse objectives for events development may be observed, for example positive socio-cultural outcomes such as greater community cohesion. This complexity of public-sector structures for events tourism, their foci and links between the private and independent events sectors highlights the value of intra-governmental linkages and other IORs to guide strategies. This is equally

applicable in Australia as in other nations where events are pivotal in achieving tourism marketing objectives.

Network perspectives in the events tourism context

A broad interpretation of networks as two or more interconnected business relationships sets the scene for exploring IORs for events tourism strategies. Three network perspectives of interest in this study were:

- (1) the analysis of *relationships* within strategy networks;
- (2) the exploration of *actors/participants* and their network positions; and
- (3) network structures, membership and processes for events tourism.

The first “networks as relationships” perspective is based on the premise that multiple stakeholders in events tourism and connections between them will influence the success of events as tourism generators. Certainly an isolated focus on dyadic exchange relationships to facilitate event production overlooks the roles of community leaders, venue managers, inter-state or international competitors and other parties who influence the events tourism agenda. Here, the neo-relationship marketing perspective (Healy and Hastings, 2001), which includes stakeholder relationships beyond consumers, is more relevant in shaping events tourism strategies. However, one cannot assume that collaborative or co-operative sets of IORs can achieve a “majority” control over events tourism strategy processes. In effect, contracts, rather than cooperative relationships or networks, often dominate the business of events. Accordingly, relationship-based networks that shape events tourism could include “buyer-seller” linkages at the pre-contract stage when government agencies bid to secure major events, as well as non-economic exchanges like community consultation about events to be staged and their impacts. In effect, events tourism strategies may be shaped by vertical relationships between event suppliers and producers, and horizontal relationships with local constituents and other parties either competing for events or collaborating to attract events.

A second network perspective concentrates on the actors/participants and their positions in the network (Hakansson and Johanson, 1992). As already implied, key actors in events tourism networks are likely to be public-sector event development agencies, tourism authorities, local, national and international event organizers, venue managers, promoters, tourists and the community. Most can be broadly categorized as organisational actors (e.g. event producers, organizers, promoters) or resource actors (e.g. events agency, tourism authority), and all participants are human actors (Holmlund and Tomroos, 1997) whose social and business relationships influence the strategy process. To analyze the contribution of these stakeholders, their network positions, the direct and indirect connections between them and the clustering and types of relationships in the network are of interest.

Together, these components begin to reveal the overall network structure or the third network perspective used to study these IORs for events tourism strategy development. Here, it is easy to identify formally structured, public-private sector networks that have orchestrated large-scale events with tourism potential. For example, the staging of the Goodwill Games in Australia in 2001 was achieved through IORs between the Queensland government, the CNN media group, Goodwill Games Inc., Tourism Queensland and an array of sponsors. Equally complex sports event

networks accompany the Rugby World Cup, where the International Rugby Union joins with national and regional rugby bodies in host countries like France to stage the cup. Network structures that embrace business, government and community are no less important in staging and marketing major festivals, a good example being the Hans Christian Andersen celebrations in Denmark. This festival, in seeking to create an international tourist attraction for Copenhagen, depended upon structured national and international networks. Linkages between the Danish government, the festival organizers and cultural, educational and tourism bodies formed the central cluster in a strategy making network. A common interest in imaging Denmark as a tourist destination, among other goals, unified the festival's network and its participating stakeholders. Other events or celebrations in host destinations or activities staged elsewhere can loosen or reinforce an events tourism network of this nature (Madhavan *et al.*, 1998). For example, Prince Fredrick and Princess Mary's visit to Australia in 2005 tightened the festival's global marketing network attracting further Australia ambassadors for the celebration.

In Denmark, as in other nations, the opportunity has clearly been tapped to grow a wider industry and government network to assume responsibility for national events tourism strategies. As more of these destination-wide networks for events tourism emerge, the composition of membership (Gulati *et al.*, 2000) is of vital concern. Events tourism networks that exhibit strength are more likely to be populated by people who have a good understanding of the micro-network of connections and knowledge that different participants offer (Hakansson and Snehota, 1989). While managers of sports stadiums and arts centers, tourism authorities and events each have valid roles in a formal or informal events tourism network, community input can be overshadowed by the strength of corporate representation. Here, network theorists (Huxham and Vangen, 2000) suggest that any confusion or debate about either leadership or membership needs to be resolved for a network's purpose to be advanced.

Similarly, the environment of the network and its decision-making processes, especially the level of collaboration and consensus building versus informal cooperation, or even transactional behavior, must be understood (Cravens *et al.*, 1996). The events tourism environment is a dynamic, sometimes volatile one where cities and regions engage in vigorous competition. Consequently, government events agencies as potential network leaders could prefer arm's length, informal cooperation and sporadic communication in order to quickly respond to event opportunities. In combination, the IORs of these event development agencies, the public sector environment in which they operate, their interpretations of strategy and characteristics of their IORs for strategy making were untapped research domains of interest.

Methodology

To address the research questions, multiple case research was implemented across six Australian states and territories. Each "case" became the IORs of the public sector events agencies that could affect state-level events tourism strategy making. The research issues of "how and why do IORs of public sector events agencies impact upon events tourism strategy making" (issue one), "how is strategy interpreted" (issue two) and "what are the forms and characteristics of these relationships" (issue three) were in focus. Convergent interviews among events and tourism experts in four Australian states were initially used to refine the issues for exploration. These interviews

confirmed that differences in the public sector environment, strategy interpretations, the status and form of existing public-private sector relationships (local, state, national and global) and the atmosphere of relationships were all worthy of exploration. A series of propositions about the research issues were investigated using a semi-structured interviewers' guide (Yin, 1993, 1994). These research propositions were:

- P1.* That event development agencies' interpretations and models of strategy will be diverse and will impact upon the role of IORs in events tourism strategy making.
- P2.* That the different public sector environments in which state or territory events agencies operate will impact upon IORs for events tourism strategy making.
- P3.* That IORs of event development agencies will reflect a corporate-government orientation more than a community orientation and, will be characterized by coordination and cooperation more than collaborative decision making.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 54 research participants across the six states/territories. Replication logic guiding the choice of cases was based on judgments about the lifecycle phases and institutional structures for events tourism in each state. These judgments were confirmed in the convergent interviews. Case study participants included senior managers of events agencies, executives of tourism marketing authorities, event directors, and also city and local government representatives with an interest in events tourism. This mix of interviewees within different types of organisations served to triangulate the data. Subsequently, both within- and cross-case analyses were used to examine the study's propositions.

Findings

For the first proposition about interpretations of strategy, an initial observation was that participants experienced some difficulty in defining events tourism strategy. Not all states had deliberately engaged in strategizing for events where tourism was the dominant focus. This finding reflected the emphases on different purposes of events investment by governments, for example a focus on general business development versus tourism alone. Nevertheless, all states/territories agreed that events tourism was one of the major impacts of their activities and were able to describe strategies (deliberate or otherwise) that were used to achieve tourism marketing results.

Among eight different forms of strategy posed as possible approaches (based on Mintzberg, 1994), a reactive/proactive approach to strategy that varied according to emerging events/episodes was most commonly selected. One or two states had formal tourism planning processes that included events and some referred to an incremental strategy process, but the reactive/proactive approach was favored. Typical comments were: "If your strategies are so structured that you can't be reactive, then there's something wrong and you lose event opportunities", and "Our strategy is more attuned to opportunity, you have your guiding principles but typically things can change on a phone call". While events development in government tourism departments reflected a degree of formality and some incrementalism, in the majority of cases, the business of events was left to event corporations whose strategies for event acquisition,

development and marketing were constantly emerging. Among these activities, a preoccupation with event acquisition often underpinned the dynamic nature of strategy. One agency indicated that at any given point, “we are running with a range of events, looking at their returns [for tourism and generally] and our ability to stage them”. This finding contrasts with the sequential, strategic planning processes for events tourism advocated in the literature (Getz, 1991, 1997a; Gnoth and Anwar, 2000). Given the strategy model practised by these agencies, a formal requirement to include diverse stakeholders in an organized strategy making process was not evident. Not surprisingly, this finding had direct implications for the kinds of networks that could influence events tourism.

For the second proposition about the impacts of the institutional environment on relationships for events tourism strategy making, several linked themes were observed. These included whether government policies existed for events and/or tourism, links between policy and a government’s purposes for events investment, the different mandates of event development agencies and the somewhat different organisational arrangements for events tourism across the states. To begin, events and tourism policies provided either a single or dual public policy framework for events tourism in most states, but in a couple of cases, policies did not exist in either domain. Regardless of the policy setting, there was consensus that events did need to be included in some policy framework to be included in government budgets. As one agency executive noted, “When you’re going into a budget, if you’re not a policy platform or an election commitment, then you’re not on the reserve bench”. In most cases, there were links between existing policy frameworks and events tourism strategies, but reflecting the literature, neither tourism nor events policies were always a precursor to strategy development.

Links could also be seen between the perceived purposes of events investment (e.g. tourism marketing versus economic development and/or socio-cultural goals) and ways in which government policies embraced events. For example, events had a reduced presence in policy when tourism was not the dominant purpose of events investment. In the latter cases, event development and marketing was simply embraced by the government’s charter for economic development, and hence events were less likely to be the subject of a discrete policy or be included in tourism policies. Where a wider economic charter for events was favored, events agencies also gave less priority to tourism marketing. Unfortunately, in some cases, neither the events agency nor the tourism authority wanted to assume responsibility for event-related tourism marketing. A comment was:

That’s been one of the big problems . . . the tourism authority is saying, “Well, that’s great, but the events agency should have the budget to do that. It’s what we refer to as the black hole.

Most interviewees who had some initial difficulty in conceiving of the idea of “events tourism” strategy were located in those agencies.

Reflecting the different policy environments, organisational arrangements to foster events tourism varied across the states. These included separate and merged tourism and events agencies as well as mixed arrangements where corporatised events agencies and tourism authorities were independent entities, but government departments also shaped events tourism directions. In turn, this mix of

arrangements influenced the roles played by event development agencies in each state and the nature of network structures that could influence strategy. For example, in the few states where events were embraced by the formal planning processes of a tourism department, there was an established network to guide the process. Such networks included community representatives and in some cases, the event development agency as one of the network leaders. In other cases, the corporatised events agency clearly led the strategy process with limited consultation. Often, the tourism authority/division only opted to engage in a dyadic relationship with the events agency for marketing purposes just prior to a major event. Thus, the different policies and organisational arrangements to develop and market events tourism and the dominance of reactive/proactive strategy processes meant that networks were mostly “soft” or informal and varied in their stakeholder representation.

“Hard” or formal networks were usually only formed for the staging of a major event. In most cases, events tourism directions were influenced, rather than developed, by loose networks of public sector events and tourism personnel and select corporate leaders. One comment was:

I don't think the network sets the strategy. The network would be used as a resource to give information. They take information from the network, but they'll still develop their own strategy.

In this context, it was sometimes difficult for events agencies to distinguish between the influence of one-on-one relationships and that of an active, albeit informal network. Leadership of informal networks ranged from the premier of the state/territory to chief executives of event development agencies and their senior events personnel. However, a lack of network leadership was apparent in some cases:

I don't think there is a single person, I can't see anyone that is really leading the charge.

Stable network leadership was seen to be challenged at times by a lack of cohesion between events and tourism personnel, but also changes in government and agency board membership. In turn, these changes affected the institutional setting for events tourism.

However, despite these leadership issues and minor membership changes, there was a level of stability because networks were often based on pre-existing relationships between bureaucrats and their corporate contacts. A relevant observation was:

Once you're in, you're in . . . people in the industry move to other organisations, but the people do not change a lot in the network.

Variations in the tightness of network clusters across the state were also tied to long-standing relationships. In those states with definite network clusters, comments were:

I think the core element of it is tightly clustered . . . you could throw a blanket over it.

One of the reasons it is tightly clustered is that a lot of people in the network have been around for a while.

Apart from corporate membership, at least one primary cluster of intra-governmental relationships existed in most states/territories.

Given the profile of the events agencies' networks already outlined, it was apparent that the third research proposition was supported. That is, there was more of a corporate-government orientation in these networks with a limited degree of community representation. However, at the micro-level, much of the strategy making was undertaken by board members, chief executives and senior events personnel in the government's events agency, so that intra-governmental networks still took precedence over private-sector relationships. Organizers of special events and festivals (often community leaders) and major venue managers were network participants, but mostly to plan marketing strategies for individual events. These stakeholders were not usually present in the cluster of relationships exerting an ongoing impact on decisions about generic strategies for events tourism. Interestingly, most respondents felt that the notion of "community" and its engagement was more relevant at regional level and far less applicable at the metropolitan, state, or indeed national levels. This appeared to highlight a more global issue of the role of community in policy environments, where attention is increasingly focused on public-private sector partnerships.

Alongside the informality of events agencies' networks, cooperation was more evident than consensus-based collaboration in these IORs. Coordination mechanisms more than cooperation or collaboration were dominant for major events where intra-governmental partnerships were essential for their delivery. In contrast, communication within strategic networks occurred on an "as needs" basis and participants rarely engaged in a formal decision process. Some agencies thought that communication should be formalized, but perceived that obstacles to a formal network were competition between network members and concerns about offending opinion leaders with extensive business and social networks outside the network. A key comment was:

They are not going to put ideas across the table that may disenchant or hurt other corporate or government players and they won't put an idea on the table that is of competitive benefit to other parties.

However, agencies were also conscious of the sensitivity of the competitive process for major events and the need to maintain a level of secrecy in that environment.

In summary, the public sector environment, including policy and organisational arrangements for events tourism, helped to create the profile of the IORs that contributed to the strategy process in the states/territories studied. Events tourism strategies were emergent, rather than deliberate, which prompted the formation of loose, cooperative networks with changing leadership and irregular communication. Tight, formalized and collaborative networks consisting of multiple stakeholders were not evident in the IORs of these agencies. Network participants were mostly drawn from the government and corporate sectors, with limited recognition of the role of the community at the decision "table".

Conclusions

Observations about the IORs of these events agencies in Australia have implications for those who are currently planning city, state or national frameworks for events tourism development. Little research into networks for capitalizing on the tourism potential of events exists, and these results underline the power of the public sector in

shaping network structures that may influence strategies. There is a clear linkage between government motives for events investment, the policy environment and the institutional arrangements used to shape events tourism directions. Hence, this study offers a platform for reflective thinking by nations currently establishing events tourism marketing structures. Because reactive/proactive strategy models along with “soft” networks were mostly observed among these Australian events agencies, it seems useful to examine whether widely inclusive network structures for events tourism are relevant or possible in a corporatised events agency environment. That the relative stability and permanency of loose networks centered on a cluster of the agencies’ pre-existing relationships suggests that wider input to strategy is not a current priority. The findings raise the question of whether public sector strategy processes for events tourism must be formalized to capitalize on network forms of governance, and whether reactive/proactive strategy models can actually be operationalised within inclusive network structures.

Currently, IORs for events tourism in Australia display more of a corporate-government orientation and there is some confusion about how communities can be involved at all in state and metropolitan events tourism strategy making. This quandary may be partly resolved by practitioners if strategies for events tourism at local/regional, metropolitan and state levels are further integrated. While this implies a more formalized approach, state-level strategies embracing event acquisition as well as the development of existing events with tourism potential across multiple regions are more likely to harness grassroots input to strategy. However, the separation of corporatised events agencies from those government agencies responsible for regional events development may not engender this approach. Unless one agency is responsible for a wider events tourism agenda or there is a formal or “hard” alliance between several agencies, at least some of whom draw community input into the strategy process, a more inclusive network for strategy making is unlikely.

In conclusion, it is not suggested that all public sector agencies facilitating events tourism growth could or should adopt formal planning models, but some mix of emergent and deliberate strategy models may be desirable to harness government, business and community input. Improved IORs of agencies with some collaborative decision making about events tourism in deliberately inclusive networks is advocated, but it may not determine strategic responses to all marketing opportunities. More insights are needed to overcome agencies’ disincentives for participating in more collaborative IORs to shape events tourism directions. In this context, further qualitative research including “action” research within policy and strategy environments would be valuable.

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