

Sustainable Event Management: a Practical Guide, M. Jones, Routledge, Oxon and New York (2014). 394 pp., (Pbk.), £42.99 ISBN 9780415840200, (Hbk.), £100.00 9780415840194, (Ebk), £42.99 9780203768723

This updated second edition of the book addresses a gap in the academic literature on sustainable event management and is an inspiring source for events practitioners and students. The events industry, by nature, involves large numbers of participants; therefore, it is imperative that event organisers develop the mindset, knowledge and competencies to deliver events sustainably. Meegan Jones not only recognises the need for the event industry professionals to urgently “change the production and purchasing habits” (p. xvii), but also goes a step further to provide comprehensive guidelines, examples, checklists and measures to help the industry in its efforts to achieve sustainable legacies. The book argues that events have the power to show sustainability in action and “every suitably produced event has the potential to inspire and motivate others to action” (p. xvii). Written in an engaging, accessible style, and with a delicate sense of humour, this book successfully operationalises sustainability concepts and shows how commitment to sustainability can add value to all stakeholders involved in the events industry.

Sustainable Event Management: a Practical Guide is structured in twelve chapters which logically cover the journey from ‘sustainability sell-in’, through stages of event planning and delivery, to planning for sustainable legacies and changing mindsets. Adopting a stakeholders’ approach, it explores the different aspects of sustainability adding a new insight to the concepts of ethical governance, transparency and inclusivity. The first three chapters of the book set the context, critically discussing the issues of sustainability and sustainable development, with a particular focus on environmental sustainability, social responsibility, sustainability policies, measurement and reporting; the role the various stakeholders have to play and how to prioritise in the different events settings. Next, Meegan Jones looks at the focal point of events of any scale and type – the sustainable event destination, the venue and the accommodation. The author then deconstructs the events production and management process and provides an insight into each and every element, dedicating separate chapters to minimise the negative impacts in the areas of energy, transport, greenhouse emissions, purchasing and resource use, waste and water. Each chapter follows a similar format – it begins with an outline of the key issues facing the industry (Why is the change needed?) and goes on to discuss the solutions available, innovations, strategies and programmes that could be undertaken to reduce the negative impact of the events (What are the alternative solutions?). All this is supported by numerous examples of good practices and lessons learnt from events that could have been organised differently. A new addition to the book’s content is the chapter on industry related standards and certifications, with a particular focus on the new ISO 20121 Event Sustainability Management Systems as a framework for a systematic approach and an opportunity for achieving external recognition. The final chapter of the book is about planning for a lasting legacy and the critical role of the event industry in leading the way to changing behaviours and attitudes, as well as equipping the host communities with soft skills and resources.

The book draws on existing literature and offers brief critical discussions on these well-researched issues without attempting to review the proliferation of research done on sustainable development and the pillars of sustainability. It assumes that the reader has the prior knowledge and interest (or passion) to put this knowledge into practice. Therefore, a significant contribution has been made to the understanding of how to operationalise these issues in an effective way to the benefit of all stakeholders involved in this industry. Contemporary work in events management only briefly touches upon the greening of the events industry, considering green as a bi-product of sustainability (Fenich, 2014). Others recognise that the concept of sustainability is complex to enact, and complete guiding instructions for enacting sustainability in events management have not yet been fully

debated and determined (Beech, Kaiser & Kasper, 2014:177). In contrast, this book demonstrates how sustainability could be enacted in business practices. The author aims to equip the reader with “the skills and knowledge to deliver a truly sustainable event” (p.4) and delivers to their promise. The book takes the reader through the stages of event planning and delivery and, drawing on examples from a wide range of events and settings, offers tried-and-tested approaches that stakeholders can adapt and employ to operationalise the key aspects of sustainability.

A number of distinctive features make this book stand out among other academic texts in the field. Firstly, it bravely adopts sustainability as an overarching principle in all aspects of event production and delivery, whilst other researchers regard it as a vague concept or a future trend. Secondly, the consideration of all stakeholders, including the customers and the entire supply chain, as opposed to only the events providers, convincingly shows that adopting a holistic approach is critical in achieving a long-lasting legacy. A further strength of the text is its usefulness as a teaching aid and practical guide. It covers every possible type of event, including Community, Cultural and Sports events, meetings, conventions and exhibitions, special event and brand events. Each chapter offers case studies which help to explore the topics covered, useful discussion questions as well as mini cases to use in class (or self-directed) activities. The Checklists and performance indicators showcase the application of the specific issues in the real world enabling the reader to relate theory to practice. The Discussion questions at the end of each chapter encourage reflection on one’s own learning and experience. In summary, it is an excellent practical guide infused with real-life examples, step-by-step scenarios and practical solutions to common challenges.

While this edition has a lot of merits, additional features could be considered for future editions to align the book with the best practices. For instance, learning outcomes and key terms could be provided at the beginning of each chapter to check that the reader has understood all key areas. Other useful features could include the provision of supporting video materials, as well as guidance for instructors on how to plan sessions using the text and advice on the use of the case studies.

Sustainable Event Management: a Practical Guide will be of great value to a wide readership, ranging from students studying events, hospitality and tourism management, to practitioners from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors who are involved in the provision of all types of events.

Overall, I found the book an excellent source of current practices and tools. Written as a dialogue with the reader, it shares in an open and engaging way personal experience and is inspiring with its passion for sustainability and in-depth understanding of the industry.

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