

Environmental Practices in Cultural Industry- a Systematic Review

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Abstract

The research area of sustainable cultural events is considered one of the most important today for the cultural industry, creative economy, and tourism. For this reason, this review aims to understand which aspects, related to economic, social, and environmental awareness could be achieved by sustainable cultural events. The importance of green cultural events, their potential benefits as environmental conservation, public awareness, education and community engagement, and the strategies employed as waste reduction and recycling, energy efficiency, eco-friendly transportation, sustainable catering etc., create an environmentally conscious celebration. The author chose to perform a literature review because the systematic review of previously written and published research papers allows to deepen the specific topic, by making comparisons. In order to collect studies for this paper, the author has carried out a literature review using the Scopus database in August 2023 and in November 2023 which can be considered as a preliminary systematic review for the selected topic using the Prisma model.

Keywords: sustainable cultural events, systematic review, prisma model, local community, sustainable tourism, cultural heritage

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Introduction

The research area of sustainable cultural events is considered one of the most important today for the cultural industry, creative economy, and tourism (Ahmad et al., 2013). Cultural events have always been an integral part of modern society, bringing people, locals, and tourists together and fostering a sense of community. So, in literature, there are research studies on events and festivals dedicated to evaluating their economic impacts and less studies focused on their social and environmental impacts and hence, the magnitude of such events often results not analysed and considered (Getz, 2010). The importance of the evaluation of environmental impact of events and festivals is important because of their negative environmental impacts, at both local and global scales. The carbon emissions from different transport modes, energy consumption for lighting and sound systems, excessive water usage, and the generation of single-use plastics and other waste pose a significant challenge to the environment. Greenhouse gas emissions from these events contribute to climate change, while improper waste management can lead to pollution and habitat degradation (Collins and Cooper, 2017).

Therefore, greening events become strategic to guarantee sustainability development in event management by making sustainable practices during the planning, organization, and implementation of an event.

The urgency of addressing environmental issues has prompted a shift towards sustainability in the events industry. Organizers, attendees, and stakeholders are recognizing the need to adopt eco-friendly practices in planning and execution. Sustainable cultural events prioritize reducing waste, conserving resources, and minimizing carbon emissions. Some crucial benefits of sustainable cultural events can be related to environmental conservation, public awareness and education, and community engagement. Environmental conservation is based on the conservation of natural resources, to reduce pollution, and to protect ecosystems. By minimizing waste and utilizing renewable energy sources, these events contribute to a greener environment. Public education

provides an opportunity to raise awareness about environmental issues and sustainable practices in the whole society. Through workshops, exhibits, and eco-friendly initiatives, attendees can learn about sustainable living and eco-conscious choices. Organizing green cultural events fosters local community engagement and network cooperation. Local businesses, environmental organizations, and volunteers start to collaborate, to promote sustainability and create a positive impact on the community as well as the brand of the location.

In other words, the potential environmental benefits of sustainable events are to create a unique competitive advantage through developing new marketing strategies to embrace environmental stewardship that can contribute to a greener planet.

Some of the most evident sustainable practices embraced by the sustainable events are waste management, use of renewable energy, eco-friendly transportation, sustainable venue selection, and local sustainable sourcing. Sustainable cultural events prioritize waste reduction and responsible waste management. Implementing comprehensive recycling and composting systems can divert a significant portion of event waste from landfills. By encouraging attendees to segregate waste and providing marked recycling bins, event organizers can create a culture of sustainability. Energy consumption is another significant contributor to the carbon footprint of cultural events. By utilizing renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind power, event organizers can minimize greenhouse gas emissions. Energy-efficient lighting, sound systems, and equipment also play a vital role in reducing energy usage. Transportation to and from cultural events can result in substantial carbon emissions. Encouraging attendees to use public transportation, carpool, or bike to the event can significantly reduce the environmental impact. Additionally, providing information on sustainable transportation options can inspire positive changes in attendees' behaviour. Choosing event venues with eco-friendly facilities and sustainable infrastructure is crucial. Green spaces, urban parks, or venues with LEED certification can help reduce the ecological footprint of cultural events. Additionally, selecting locations with easy access to public transportation can further promote sustainable attendance. Cultural events often involve food and beverage offerings. Prioritizing local, organic, and ethically sourced products can minimize the carbon footprint associated with food transportation and support local communities.

Summarizing all these aspects, this systematic review aims to understand what the recent trends are to fill in the literature data gaps and to identify new research directions related to economic, social, and environmentally sustainable cultural events. The research question is important to understand the development of sustainable cultural events, their potential benefits as environmental conservation, public awareness, education and community engagement, and the strategies employed as waste reduction and recycling, energy efficiency, eco-friendly transportation, sustainable catering etc.

The novelty of this study relies on the fact that it analyses the environmental sustainability of cultural events through a systematic review, allowing the identification of future research directions regarding the environmental impacts associated with cultural practices.

1. Methodology

The paper is based on a systematic review using PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The PRISMA guidelines are widely recognized and used for conducting and reporting systematic reviews and provide a transparent and comprehensive checklist to ensure the quality and completeness of reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The PRISMA guidelines consist of a 27-item checklist and a four-phase flow diagram. The checklist covers the title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and funding sections of a systematic review. Adhering to PRISMA guidelines helps researchers ensure that their systematic reviews are conducted and reported in a standardized and transparent manner. As mentioned by Batidas-Orrego et al. (2023) PRISMA generates key evidence regarding the design and use of evaluation methodology for the selected topic.

The systematic review is considered a scientific strategy that is used in different areas of study and is widely accepted as a comprehensive search tool for different topics of interest. The results of the systematic review would be quite precise and adequate according to the choice of keywords and period of the current study. However, this analysis has also some limitations because it can be accepted as preliminary research for further high-quality studies or evaluation of existing literature review. The quality of each systematic review depends on different factors such as the objective of the study, the research database, the number of citations, the type of the study, the meta-analysis models, the applied test for heterogeneity etc.

For the needs of the research, the author conducts a literature review of published articles and conference papers on the chosen topic to find similarities in the research done, to identify gaps and differences in these studies, and to suggest some further research trends. (Chigbu et al., 2023). To collect the appropriate studies for this paper in August 2023 the author has carried out a literature review using the Scopus database, as it is considered among the most popular and easy-to-use search engines (Benvenuto et al., 2023). Results containing the following search terms “sustainable cultural events” in article title/abstract/keywords were recorded. Only papers published in the English language in the areas of Social Science, Business and Management, and Economics to August 2023 were considered for the sample. Based on the search conditions above, 121 research articles were found. Moreover, papers were all screened for relevance to the keywords and by doing so, 97 of them were excluded from the analysis for lack of relevance. In November 2023 the same research was repeated. Based on the same search conditions, 244 research articles were found and 236 of them were excluded from the analysis for the lack of relevance. Finally, 8 research articles are selected for discussion in this systematic review. Figure 1 and Figure 2 present the selection logic of the included and excluded study results.

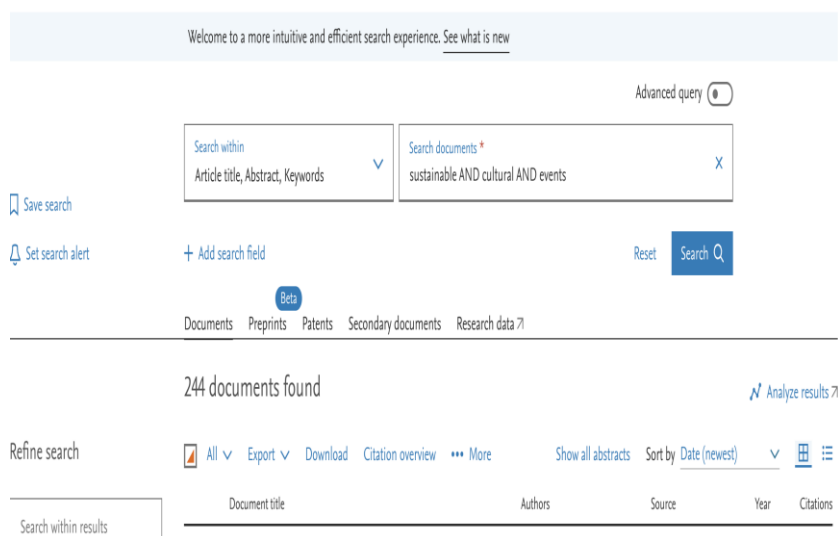


Figure 1. Screenshot of Scopus database analysis, November 2023
Source: Scopus

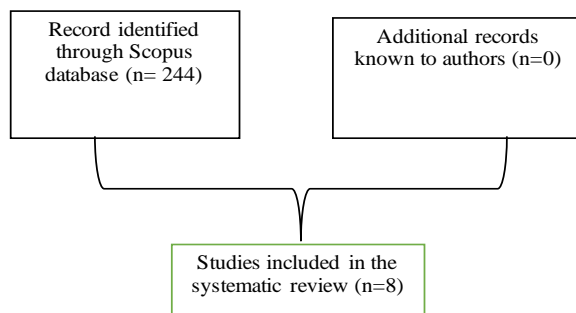


Figure 2. Papers selection process
Source: Elaboration of the author

2. Discussion of results

The first step for the discussion of results includes a data synthesis investigating the co-occurrences of keywords of the studies included in this systematic review, using VOSviewer software. The aim is to distinguish the interrelations among sustainable events as the subject of the research. The research applies the open-source VOSviewer software (version 1.6.20) which has been successfully applied in numerous previous reviews for co-occurrence analysis. The minimum number of keyword occurrences has been two times. The final visualization shows the highest weight of each keyword in the clustering. In our case, sustainable events are strongly related to the core keyword “sustainability” in three pillars: location (red color), event (green color), and assessment (blue color). The obtained data were exported in CSV file format for the Scopus database (see Figure 3).

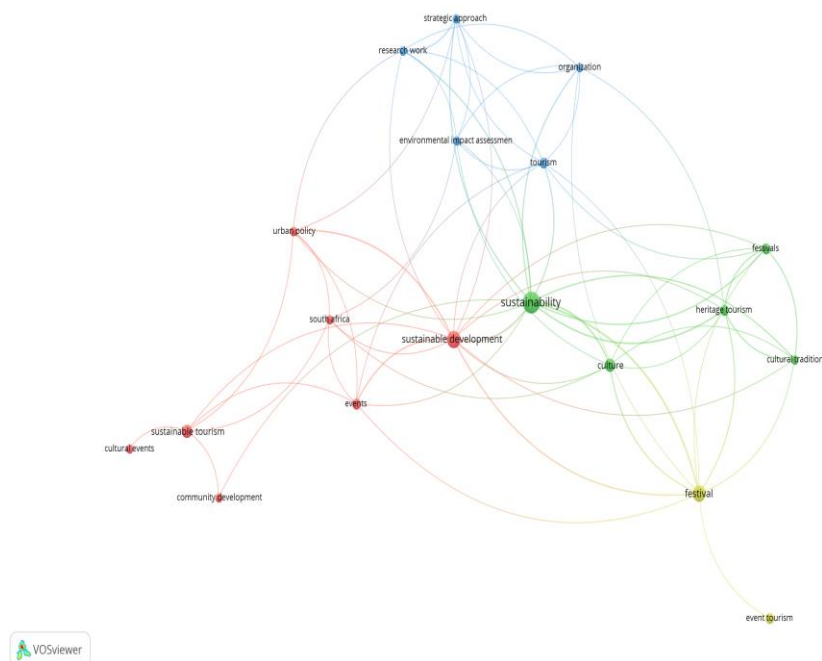


Figure 3. Co-occurrences of keywords related with sustainable events using Scopus database and based on VOSviewer software
Source: Elaboration of the author

The second step of the discussion tests the aim of this paper and reveals some of the most important aspects of the studies included in this systematic review. The description of the relevant economic, social, and environmental aspects is applied directly from the articles. Table 1 presents the frequency of the similar description in the different sources.

Table 1. Relevant economic, social, and environmental aspects achieved by sustainable events.

Economic, social, and environmental aspects	Sources							
	Description	Kádár, B., Klaniczay, J. (2022)	Topler, J. P. (2021)	Kačerausas, T., Streimikie, D. and Bartkute, R. (2021)	Lőrincz, K., Ernszt, I. and Csapó, J. (2022)	Jelinčič, D. A. (2021)	Cetină I., Cristache, S.E., Ciobotar, G.N. and Bădin, A., (2020)	Okech, R.N. (2011)
Create a unique and sustainable local identity for local communities	x	x					x	
Develop a unique, proximity and sustainable tourism	x	x	x		x		x	
Select an effective branding for experience economy and city marketing strategies	x							
Protection of the environment and the preservation of the historical heritage	x		x		x	x		
Involve the local community in the creation process (social cohesion)	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Help foster urban or rural regeneration as long as the number of visitors and tourists does not exceed the destination carrying capacity		x		x				x
Use of natural materials		x				x		
Green mobility and employment opportunities		x	x		x			x
Positive investments and initiatives		x	x					
Demand for more sustainable products and services as a result of “green turn” and “creative turn”			x					
Unconditioned and unlimited creativity can lead to destruction of entire social and natural systems			x					x
Reduced water consumption			x					
Waste reduction/minimize use of plastics			x	x		x		

Economic, social, and environmental aspects	Sources							
Description	Kádár, B., Klanczay, J. (2022)	Topler, J. P. (2021)	Kačerausas, T., Streimikie, D. and Bartkute, R. (2021)	Lőrincz, K., Ernszt, I. and Csapó, J. (2022)	Jelinčić, D. A. (2021)	Cetină I., Cristache, S.E., Ciobotar, G.N. and Bădin, A., (2020)	Okech, R.N. (2011)	Lee, Y., Peng, C.; Lee, T. and Zhao, Z. (2022)
Environmentally friendly food and drink (low CO ₂)			x	x				
Use of green energy			x					
Create networks and campaigns focused on sustainable opportunities- transport, climate, mobile application etc.			x	x	x			
Green Public Procurement/ Sustainable Development Goals			x			x		x

Source: Elaboration of the author

Some considerations emerge as important for this systematic review. First, the involvement of the local community and its role in sustainable and green cultural events is important. Sustainable cultural events create an atmosphere of celebration and unity, breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of belonging among attendees. The shared experience of celebrating culture and art helps build social connections, creating a foundation for stronger and more cohesive communities. Sustainable cultural events often use their platform to raise awareness about social issues and advocate for positive change. By partnering with social and environmental organizations, these events can bring attention to pressing challenges and mobilize communities to take collective actions. Engaging local people in sustainable cultural events promotes intergenerational dialogue and mentorship. By involving local communities in event planning and showcasing their talents, these events inspire the next generation to become active agents of positive social change.

Secondly, the job creation is strongly related to the sustainable cultural events. Hosting cultural events generates employment opportunities across various sectors, including hospitality, retail, transportation, and event management. Residents often find temporary employment as event staff, vendors, and performers, enhancing their economic stability. Furthermore, event-related jobs often contribute to skill-building and capacity development, empowering individuals with valuable experience and expertise.

Thirdly, sustainable cultural events have long-term economic benefits for the regional economy and tourism. Well-organized cultural events can enhance the appeal of a destination, attracting more visitors in the future. This sustained tourism influx creates a steady stream of income and contributes to the development of a sustainable tourism industry. The events can generate substantial economic activity for the city, benefiting local businesses, hospitality sectors, and cultural institutions.

Finally, by embracing eco-friendly practices, engaging local businesses, and promoting community-based tourism, these events contribute to economic growth while preserving cultural heritage. The economic impact of these events extends beyond the event itself, creating a ripple effect of economic benefits that positively impact the host community. As powerful engines of economic vitality, sustainable cultural events exemplify the potential of culture and creativity in fostering resilience, empowering communities, and creating a brighter economic future for societies.

Figure 4 presents the rating of the first important economic, social, and environmental aspects achieved by sustainable events in the studies included in this systematic review.

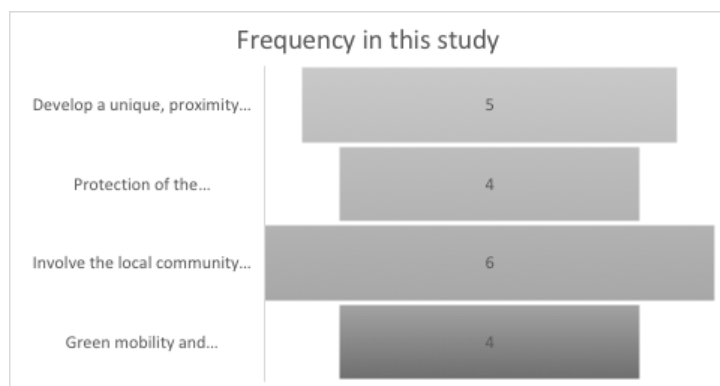


Figure 4. Topic’s frequency analyzed in the study

Source: Elaboration of the author

Conclusion

Sustainable cultural events serve as powerful platforms to celebrate culture, art, and traditions while promoting environmental responsibility. The present research reviewed 8 articles and considering the PRISMA guidelines, and according to the VOSviewer results, some recent research trends have emerged.

The manuscript also reveals the use of describing techniques that help to visualize and synthesize considerations for further research in the field of green cultural events.

By adopting eco-friendly practices, sustainable cultural events can minimize waste, reduce carbon emissions, and inspire positive change among attendees. Involving local communities in event planning fosters a sense of ownership and encourages responsible behaviors among attendees. By prioritizing sustainability and adopting eco-conscious practices, these events demonstrate that cultural celebrations can be entertaining, enlightening, and respectful of the planet.

Achieving sustainability in cultural events requires collaboration among event organizers, local authorities, businesses, and community members. Partnerships with environmental organizations and sustainability experts can offer valuable insights and support in implementing eco-friendly practices. As the movement for green cultural events gains momentum, it offers a blueprint for fostering environmental awareness, inspiring positive behavioral change, and building a more sustainable future for all. Through collaboration, innovation, and commitment, we can create a world where cultural celebrations not only bring people together but also contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.

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