

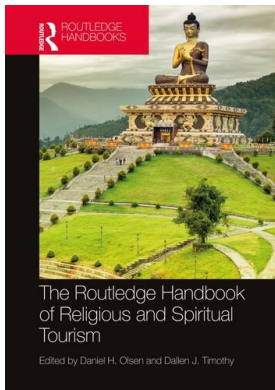
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Daniel H. Olsen, Dallen J. Timothy

Managing complex issues in religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations

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Ruth Dowson

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26

MANAGING COMPLEX ISSUES IN RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

Rev. Ruth Dowson

Introduction

This chapter undertakes a critical review of the current state of research into the complex issues faced by those who organise religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations. The current literature emanates from a range of multidisciplinary sources, which have formerly been located in distinct, traditional disciplinary silos (Dowson, 2019a). The chapter also investigates research into the contemporary context of the dynamic between religious and spiritual aspects and origins of festivals, celebrations and associated events within the background of the global experience economy. It notes the impact of culture on religious and spiritual festivals, celebrations and events, considering the differences between appropriation and appreciation of other cultures as they coalesce. In identifying the complex issues that arise from these circumstances and perspectives, the chapter assesses the future development of conceptual and theoretical approaches to religious and spiritual festivals, celebrations and events.

The chapter will identify and assess management issues that face the organisers of religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations both now and in the future. These management issues include sector-specific concerns, as well as those that apply across all events and festivals. This chapter incorporates a range of relevant examples, from both religious and spiritual perspectives, and attempts to critically consider the different types of issues arising from events, festivals and celebrations that involve or result in religious and spiritual tourism, and which require the identification and management of specific issues that arise from the religious or spiritual nature of the events.

Event contexts

In an era dominated by the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), in which the acquisition of physical goods is increasingly subordinated to the pursuit of experiences that result in memories (Wood, 2009, 2017; Wood & Moss, 2015; Wood & Slater, 2015), events often provide the means of gaining such experiences. Although tourism emerged from its roots in religious travel (Timothy & Olsen, 2006), there continues to be a considerable growth and profusion of different types of religious tourism, and now also of spiritual tourism, across

the globe. Such tourism today is often embedded within the context of an event, or located around a series of events. The life we live in the twenty-first century is increasingly based and set within an environment where we engage with others through the medium of events. This trend has become known as 'Eventization', and is situated within the 'Critical Events' turn, and elsewhere (Becci, Burchardt & Casanova, 2013; Dowson, 2016, 2019b; Lamond & Platt, 2016; Maasø, 2018; Pfadenhauer, 2010; Spracklen, Richter & Spracklen, 2013). The religious world is not exempt from this development, as faith organisations embrace the structure of events to promote their messages, to build community, strengthen relationships, and raise funds, amongst other purposes (Ron & Timothy, 2019).

Concept of eventization of faith

Roche's (2000, p. 3) declaration that events are 'sociologically important in characterising and understanding modern societies' is vital to understanding the importance and role of events in the creation and growth of flourishing religious and spiritual communities, as well as influencing individual lives. Wood (2009) suggests that experiential events are utilised in marketing to effectively generate immediate choices and consequences, while embedding enduring transformation, for example, through the ongoing purchasing of a product. Pfadenhauer (2010) suggested that faith could be such a product, identifying eventization as a concept and applying it to the Roman Catholic Church. Pfadenhauer (2010) builds on an interpretation of the use of events as a marketing tool in promoting religion on a large scale. She studied a very large Roman Catholic Church event, World Youth Day, which brings together young people from around the world, combining the traditional forms of Roman Catholic festivals within a contemporary (modern) event structure. According to Pfadenhauer, this is a similar activity to any brand activation or experiential marketing event in the secular world, but with the overall purpose of recruiting or evangelising new members for the church. Pfadenhauer labelled this activity 'eventization of faith'. Becci, Burchardt and Casanova (2013) drew their conclusions from religious topography, acknowledging the religious innovations that have followed secularisation. They identify traditional religious celebrations as becoming united with the general move towards the eventization of leisure, even inhabiting secular public spaces. Becci et al (2013) interpret the burgeoning extension of events in the religious space as branding and marketing, supporting Pfadenhauer's (2010) conclusions.

From a secular perspective, and explicitly within the context of the turn to critical events studies, Spracklen, Richter and Spracklen (2013) considered the revolutionary nature of the changes that have commodified leisure, eventizing and monetising public leisure spaces for new forms of shared activity that often become ritualised, developing shared meaning for participants. This trend equally influences the delivery of religious and sacred events and festivals, as accepted societal norms evolve, whereby social activities that draw people together increasingly take the form of organised events, whether in public or private spaces—and often require payment to hire venue space. Indeed, we have observed the increased use of secular spaces for religious events (Dowson, 2016). This move sees venues such as the Leeds First Direct Arena or Butlin's seaside holiday camps host religious events. Such events often include elements of the spectacular (Debord, 2012), drawing into question their authenticity.

Critical event studies aim to ground the academic study of events beyond the mere logistical, no longer limited to typological analyses. Lamond and Platt (2016) welcome the growing number of university modules that consider cultural, social, political and even religious perspectives on the neo-liberal world of events. This critical approach is developed further

by Spracklen and Lamond (2016) in a self-acknowledged polemical research monograph, aimed to encourage critical thinking in events students, in place of the standard logistics as taught on many undergraduate and postgraduate university events courses. Both Lamond and Platt, and Spracklen and Lamond, recognise the importance of context—social, political and cultural—in understanding the nature of events—and here I would add the existence of a layer of religious and spiritual considerations to the mix. All too often, the theological nature of a religious or spiritual event is forgotten, to the detriment not only of meaning but practical delivery, and even organisational reputation.

No consideration of the impact of religious and spiritual events would be complete without a consideration of Falassi's (1967) pioneering typological model of ritual. Falassi's study of festivals identified a range of nine ritual aspects that can productively be applied to the context of religious and spiritual celebrations, festivals and events, construing sacred time, in contrast to the ordinary time of everyday life. Table 26.1 considers these different rites and provides relevant examples.

Table 26.1 Falassi's typology of ritual applied to religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations

| <i>Rites</i> | <i>Religious and Spiritual rituals in events, festivals and celebrations</i> |
|---|--|
| Rites of purification, cleansing, chasing away evil by fire/holy water/sacred relics/symbols | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anointing with holy oil • Smudging to cleanse a space with burning sage |
| Rites of passage, marking transition from one stage of life to another, e.g. initiations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptism, confirmation, Bar/Bat mitzvah • Moon cycle circle group |
| Rites of reversal—symbolic inversion, e.g. (masks &) costumes; gender misidentification; role confusion; using sacred places for profane activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costumes—robed choir, robed clergy • Samhain festival marking the return of winter with bonfires and wearing disguising costumes to visit neighbours |
| Rites of conspicuous display—objects of high symbolic value put on display, touched or worshipped; used in processions; guardians and social/ political/ religious elite display their powers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statues of Mary in processions on 15 August • Beltane celebrations at Glastonbury Tor or Stonehenge |
| Rites of conspicuous consumption—feasts, food & drink; gifts showered on guests; sacred (Holy) communion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy Communion (Eucharist) services using contemporary or traditional language • Shared meals—bring and share vegan food, 'breaking bread together' • Antithetical—the opposite of conspicuous consumption |
| Ritual dramas, retelling of myths and legends or historical re-enactment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passover Meal—re-telling the story of the Hebrew people leaving Egypt for the Promised Land • Coronation of Danish kings at Stonehenge |
| Rites of exchange from commerce—buying and selling—to gift exchanges and charitable donations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources shop or stall selling clothing, music, DVDs and books, CDs of talks, publications, Fair Trade goods • Energy exchange—engagement with the process or event, in place of financial contribution |

(Continued)

| <i>Rites</i> | <i>Religious and Spiritual rituals in events, festivals and celebrations</i> |
|--|--|
| Rites of competition—games, sports, contests of all kinds either highly unpredictable and merit-based or ritualised and predictable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family or all-age services, ‘Messy church’ with games and food • ‘Spiritual marketplace’ as different spiritualities and religions offer choice |
| De-valorization rites—take place at the end of the event; Restoring normal time and space, closing ceremonies; Formal/informal farewells | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hajj—pilgrims change back into their own clothes from white Irham dress • Spiritual circle is broken, participants leave the site |

The power of ritual in encouraging and even enforcing action should not be overlooked, as there may be serious implications that arise as a result, impacting on logistics, health and safety, as well as other aspects of the event.

Event logistics

Events, festivals and other celebrations are not as simple to manage as might be thought by the non-professional, as health and safety considerations combine with (often unexpected) external impacts to require the adjustment of even well-thought-through plans (Dowson & Bassett, 2018, Theodore, 2018). However, the complexities involved in managing religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations transcend (Turner, 1982) those of standard event management, precisely because they include an additional layer of meaning—which is the religious or spiritual element (Dowson, 2015). Such a perspective can have an impact on the event logistics in many ways; the following section considers the event management issues that can arise in the development and delivery of religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations.

Event management issues

The section identifies and assesses the issues that face the organisers of religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations, both now and in the future. These issues include sector-specific event management concerns as well as those that apply across all events and festivals.

Low levels of events professionalism

Many religious organisations have professional religious officer-holders and leaders, such as imams, rabbis, monks, priests or ministers, and many of these are employed or paid by their organisation. However, it is common practice that such organisations generally rely on members or adherents to undertake the vast array of voluntary activities that promote the organisation and enable it to function. For spiritual (non-religious) activities, there are fewer structured arrangements in place, and less centrally-coordinated organisational activity overall, even where such organisations do exist. As a result, activities such as planning and delivering events are often undertaken or at least supported by ordinary attendees; the church, temple, synagogue or mosque with a professional event manager within the ranks of

its regular membership is indeed blessed to have such input, but on the whole, those people who are active in supporting their local place of worship, are (hopefully enthusiastic) volunteers, with little if any training in events management or processes. It is rare to find even large churches that have complex events programmes employing qualified events professionals. They are much more likely to incorporate volunteers into the event team—gap year students from home or abroad, or semi-retired and retired members with time on their hands. Consequently, despite their enthusiasm and even years of experience, those who develop and deliver religious and spiritual events are often unacquainted with basic knowledge of event management processes or relevant health and safety regulations.

The pulsating nature of the events workforce from the build-up construction phase of events to the post-event break-down means that fewer workers are required in planning stages than at the event itself. This is reflected in Alvin Toffler's (1990) concept of the 'pulsating organisation' that morphs in size, in response to circumstances. As a result, religious and spiritual event organisers may struggle to recruit adequate numbers of event staff, whether paid or volunteers, and most will certainly not include trained, qualified or experienced event professionals.

The levels of event professionalism in religious and spiritual events management and delivery are much lower than in other sectors of the events industry, such as business or sports events management. However, religious organisations run the risk of event failure and serious reputational damage by allowing (or encouraging, and even coercing) 'enthusiasts' or staff untrained in events management to play major roles in event strategic planning and operational delivery, without consideration of the cost to the organisation and to the individuals of such actions. An emerging challenge is to acknowledge the complexities of event management and acquire the professional event management skills needed to ensure safe delivery (Dowson & Bassett, 2018).

The event planning process requires strategic consideration of who does what—agreeing in advance the roles that are required, who will fill those roles, as well as how they will be recruited, managed and trained, and what tasks they will undertake. Although some religious organisations are beginning to acknowledge the need for training, thus far there are few that encourage professional education (for example, qualifying through a university degree in events management), or training (such as one-day workshops for volunteers involved in leading event programmes in their place of worship) or the encouragement to use practical resources, such as event planning and management textbooks. All too often, those who support their religious organisations in events are doing so because no-one else showed up to help (or the usual suspects appear), and even when they are enthusiasts, little is done by the organisation leadership to ensure the safe delivery of an event.

High reliance on volunteers in the sector

There is a heavy reliance in events management generally, but more so in events run by religious institutions and charitable organisations, on the use of volunteers to undertake key event tasks and roles, perhaps supported by a small core team that often includes religious leaders and lay employees. The pulsating nature of the events workforce (Toffler, 1984; Toffler, 1990; Van der Wagen, 2007) requires a much larger team to deliver an event on site than it does to plan the event in advance, and many organisations—and especially in the religious and spiritual sector—do not have the financial resources to pay for such staffing levels. Thus, they are dependent on volunteers completing operational tasks and even assuming strategic roles. A key issue in the use of such volunteer labour in events is the lack of

professionalism in selecting, training and managing those volunteers, while the over-use of untrained volunteers risks event failure as well as the organisation's reputation within the local community and beyond, with wider implications when problems emerge in national and local press, which is all the more common in the era of social media where almost everyone has an opinion and a camera-phone.

Lack of clarity or forethought of the purpose of an event

Many religious and spiritual events may be timed on a seasonal basis or connected with celebrating lifecycle occasions. But any religious or spiritual event, whether intended for internal or external audiences, will have an ultimate purpose. Such intentions may be explicit or implicit, or even hidden or covert. In particular, the overwhelmingly paramount consideration of mission or evangelism is almost certainly present in many religious or spiritual events, which may not be expressed or even recognised by the organisers (Dowson, 2015). In Table 26.2, the top row shows the resulting groupings from research into church event purposes; the subsequent rows in each grouping show that there are different types of event purposes, which are explained later.

To give examples, with the governance grouping (column 1, row 1), the purpose is corporate governance (column 1, row 2). In a traditional church context, this governance could include the Annual Parochial Council Meeting (APCM), and meetings of the Parish Church Council (PCC). The type of event involved in this purpose would be meetings, but a PCC meeting is easier to organise than an APCM. Some event church purposes involve a spiritual

Table 26.2 Groupings of identified event purposes

| <i>Governance</i> | <i>Spiritual church activity</i> | <i>Internally-driven events</i> | <i>Community focus</i> | <i>External organisations hiring facilities for events</i> |
|----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Corporate governance | Catechesis Discipleship Holiness Initiation Life-cycle Liturgical Ritual Seasons Worship Change and transformation Education Evangelism and Mission Forming group identity Learning Nurturing Pastoral Relationship-building within the church Ritual Reputation Teaching | Fundraising Networking and growing sustainable networks Social justice | Ecumenism Interfaith Relationship-building within wider community Civic events | Commercial activity Community-based activity |

Source: Dowson (2015, p. 179).

dimension, such as learning about the Christian faith, learning how to live as a Christian, and worshipping God, but there are also vital spiritual dimensions in baptisms, confirmations and ordinations. The life-cycle purpose includes events around birth, marriage and death. Meanwhile, there are other events that are not restricted to the people who attend church, and these events might fall within the 'spiritual' grouping, although there are times when they are events that fall outside the purely spiritual, for example, an Alpha course (evangelistic seeker programme) (Holy Trinity Brompton, 2018) or a social event. The community focus grouping might be a fundraising event, or working to support the local community through 'family fun days'. Civic events also have a community focus, from Remembrance Day to annual civic services. Many churches are being encouraged to consider hiring out their spaces to external organisations, whether on a commercial basis or for the local community, so for example the local camera club might meet in the church hall, or parents who attend the church toddler group might hire the hall for a birthday party.

The key to understanding the purpose of religious events, festivals and celebrations is that there is complexity in marrying the two aspects—of event purpose, and event form (i.e. what type of event). There are many varied event purposes for church events, but it is not always possible to match these up with a specific event type; a fundraiser may take many different event forms, but the purpose is fundraising. Religious and spiritual event organisers often fail to consider what the purpose of a specific event is. This is complicated by the fact that events can have multiple purposes. This is especially true of evangelism and mission, which are at times implicit, rather than explicit, and may even have covert or hidden purposes. It is vital for event organisers to consider and agree on the purpose of any event before they start planning (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2011; Dowson & Bassett, 2018).

There are aspects of repetition of religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations, as shown in Figure 26.1, indicating the frequency of the event. The frequency of an event carries specific management issues, as those which are delivered more often are easier to remember in terms of processes and activities required to deliver a safe and successful event. Any new or one-off event will bring with it new challenges and will consume more energy in preparation and planning, recognising, responding to and dealing with new issues as they

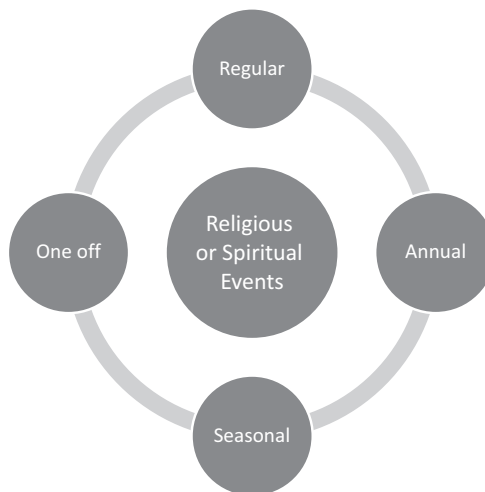


Figure 26.1 Frequency of spiritual and religious events

arise. Regular events may bring their own challenges as event teams become complacent and forget to be vigilant. For all events, it is important to develop a manual that includes event purpose and details, health and safety aspects—especially continuously updated rolling risk assessments, budgets, operational planning, contingencies, staffing, marketing and communications, legal requirements and evaluations, and capturing improvements for the next event. It should be noted that for some events, ‘regular’ might mean every 10, 12 or even 20 years; for example, the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops from around the world is held every 10 years (Lambeth Conference, 2019), while the Hindu Kumbh Mela festival takes place four times over the course of 12 years, attracting tens of millions of participants (Prayagraj Mela Pradhikaran, 2019), spanning the Hindu religion, as well as the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, traditional rituals, and socio-cultural customs and practices.

Lack of consideration of theological implications

The theological concerns that impact on the delivery and planning of religious and spiritual events are rarely considered by those involved, and yet they influence the construction, design and execution of such an event, and should therefore form part of the planning process. This aspect of planning for religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations is one that has rarely been addressed by religious organisations, although in 2018–2019, some UK churches and cathedrals have experienced the negative impacts of introducing events into their sacred spaces that are deemed out of kilter with the nature of the building. This aspect links into the earlier consideration of the purpose of the event, as well as the type of event format that is deemed appropriate for the sacred surroundings of a place of worship.

Types of events

One of the complexities that emerges from studying and understanding religious and spiritual events is that there are many different types of events, festivals and celebrations in this sector. It is worth considering the implications of some of these differences, and their eventual origins, as they impact on, and contribute to, some of the complex issues that require management. Existing events, festivals and celebrations may have been handed down from generation to generation, perhaps with explicit meaning and purpose. Alternatively, traditional events, festivals and celebrations may have continued, having lost their original meanings in the mists of time, or having been adopted, adapted, appropriated or appreciated by and in other cultures and contexts. In contemporary society, the creation, emergence and evolution of new types of events, festivals and celebrations continue to expand the breadth of spiritual and religious events, as secular event designers develop new experiences.

Technical aspects

Technical aspects of events affect the way participants receive the event content. For example, sound quality can make the difference between a poor experience and a truly connected event, influencing and transforming the lives of those present and facilitating connection with the numinous. The primary function of speaker systems in churches is the spoken word, but many churches with contemporary worship styles have applied sound systems and audio technology to enhance the musical worship experience, making it more immersive (Heinze, 2019). Such systems localise where the sound is coming from, providing congregations with

a less distracting listening experience, as the audio speakers are situated closer to the people, enhancing the connection between worship leaders and worshippers and resulting in more engaging immersive veneration. Such technical developments have transferred from the secular music world, where there is an expectation of high-quality audio-visual experience at an event, to address the issues of poor intelligibility in reverberant spaces through acoustic treatment, and high-quality sound reinforcement systems with directional loudspeakers. Outdoor spiritual and religious celebrations and festivals benefit equally from such technological advances, and can also include sound and noise-limiting equipment, protecting neighbouring areas from unwanted noise pollution.

Cultural risks

In every event, risks need to be addressed. In professional event management, the planning process includes undertaking a detailed risk assessment, to identify potential risks at the event, and to enhance and protect the event and public safety. An event organiser is responsible for many event aspects, but none more vitally important than meeting the obligations to provide a safe event. There will always be risks associated with events, and importantly the event organiser must put the risk into some sort of context. A risk assessment will enable the event organiser to identify potential risks and decide what measures need to be put in place or what actions need to be taken to reduce the risk.

There are three basic steps involved in a risk assessment, which is considered a 'living' document as it continues through pre-event planning, the event itself and beyond. These steps are:

- 1 Look for hazards (i.e. anything that can cause harm). For large events it will be useful to divide the site into smaller sectors. A secular outdoor festival site, for example, could be divided into the following sectors: ticket office, wristband exchange, car parking, main stage, main arena, arena entrance, individual marquees, and camping field.
- 2 Decide who might be harmed and how. Examples of people at risk at a secular festival site would include festival-goers, employees, temporary workers, volunteers, members of the public, contractors, and suppliers. Event managers should always pay particular attention to vulnerable people, such as young children, people with disabilities or inexperienced staff. Examples of how people could be harmed on a festival site include cuts and bruises, sprains and strains, broken and dislocated bones, absorbing substances, noise injuries, burns and scalds, crushing or trapping injuries, and flying or falling objects.
- 3 Evaluate the risks and decide what needs to be done first (if anything). To help evaluate the risks, a scoring system is used. Numerical scores are given to the Probability (P) and Severity (S) of risks, and these scores are multiplied to get a rating for the risk. The risk factor is calculated by multiplying the Probability score by the Severity score.

Theodore (2018) developed a specialist approach to risk assessment for the religious event space, which identifies the risk factors in logistics, operations and event administration. Theodore suggests that these are general risk factors. In addition to the usual risk considerations around people, property, finances, systems, environment and image, religious events and religious sites should also include an assessment of cultural, historical and religious values. A well-prepared and executed risk assessment document prepared by a competent person with expertise in health and safety matters will not prevent accidents from taking place at a religious or secular event, festival or celebration, but it will enable the event manager to

address health and safety issues as and when they arise, with a well-considered plan in place. Korstanje, Raj and Griffin (2018) have focused in depth on the health, safety and risk challenges that face events and tourism in the religious context.

Cultural risk assessment

An innovative Cultural Risk Assessment model was developed by Dowson and Albert, which supports the identification and management of cultural risks at an event. This is especially important in the context of religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations. The role of the event manager is to identify and acknowledge any issues concerning values, rituals, behaviours and diverse practices, and respect them, working towards providing and supporting an inclusive environment in which the event festival or celebration takes place (Table 26.3).

Table 26.3 Cultural risk assessment

| <i>Issue</i> | <i>Details/examples</i> |
|---|---|
| General Guest Protocols | High profile/VIP guests |
| Specific Religious Protocols and Religious Considerations | Muslim Protocols Prayer Times Direction of Prayer Location of Prayer Halal Options including crockery and cutlery Alcohol Catholic Protocols Sunday Mass 7th Day Adventist Practices Specific Religious Traditions Specific Dietary Requirements, including for different levels of religious practice and religiosity, e.g. Glatt kosher Entertainment—consider suitability for audience |
| Demographic context | Review attendee lists for differences in demographics and make relevant recommendations for content, style and structure of the event |
| Location issues | Including relevant food dishes in the menu, e.g. local cuisine, or dishes that reflect the event host culture |
| Language | Language barriers |
| Accessibility | Ensure venue is accessible for those with physical disabilities |
| Event Timing | Avoid certain times and seasons, e.g. no multi-faith events on Friday afternoon/evening |
| Dietary Requirements | Includes guests having different tastes in food, allergies, religious and non-religious restrictions and requirements, e.g. Halal, Kosher, and Vegan All dishes must be labelled with ingredients, label Vegetarian, Vegan and Halal dishes clearly so guests will be confident in knowing they are eating the correct food Some religions look poorly on food waste, which could cause offense to some guests if there is a notable amount of food waste |

| <i>Issue</i> | <i>Details/examples</i> |
|--|--|
| Alcohol | Consider sensibilities of guests who do not drink for religious or personal reasons. All drinks and menus should have clear labelling as to what is non-alcoholic, and bartenders must be clear when serving drinks |
| Etiquette | Could include wearing modest dress |
| Weather | Check climate and weather seasonal trends and potential issues, advise guests on appropriate dress and behaviour |
| Anxiety and mental health | Some guests may suffer with anxiety or mental health; being in social situations they are not used to may trigger attacks. Ensure there are quiet places to which people can go to in case of panic attacks or stressful moments. If someone is known to have anxiety, ensure they are introduced to people carefully so they feel comfortable in knowing that they are welcomed and have familiar faces |
| Personality | Diverse backgrounds will include extrovert and introvert. It is important that everyone understands each other's boundaries to ensure no one is uncomfortable or offended. For a multicultural wedding, having an event before the actual day will enable people to adjust to one another |
| Gender | Ensure designated spaces for men and women to pray separately if needed. Show people where prayer spaces are located. |
| Sexuality | Homosexuality views in a diverse context; whilst it may not be appropriate or possible to change perspectives towards different lifestyles, it may be possible to remind all guests why they are there, e.g. to celebrate the couple at a wedding |
| Understanding Different Cultures; New Experience | Could suggest shared activities to engage in other's cultural contexts |

Source: Dowson and Albert (2019).

The Cultural Risk Assessment suggests specific areas to consider in planning a religious or spiritual event, proposing actions to manage the risks. The outcome of undertaking such an assessment as part of the ongoing event planning process is to enhance the event experience for participants and to reduce the potential for damage or negative issues that might arise.

Conclusion

Although there are many complex issues that arise from the planning and delivery of religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations, there are many gaps in the theoretical literature and practical academic research that specifically relate to this context. Religious and spiritual events, festivals and celebrations are all governed by the same processes and logistical management structures that relate to any other event. However, it is clear that the religious or spiritual dimension of these events adds an additional layer of complexity, which provides potential for specific research in the future. The growth of the global experience economy in general influences the growth of events in the religious and spiritual sector, encouraging expansion that mirrors the developments in secular events.

The future conceptual and theoretical development of understanding religious and spiritual festivals, celebrations and events should include work in several specific areas. First, little is known about the detailed event management and logistical aspects of religions and

spiritual events. These should become a central focus of research because, as noted above, these types of events differ in their roles and contexts. Second, training religious and spiritual event volunteers is also crucial for the sector, as they typically do not have the same level of expertise that exists in other event realms. Third, the impact of the adoption, adaptation, appropriation and appreciation of religious and spiritual rituals in secular event contexts, and the role of rituals in spiritual and religious events are worthy of additional research, as these elements overlap considerably, such as in certain community festivals, founders celebrations and harvest festivals. Fourth, we likewise know little about the theological perspectives on religious and spiritual events. A deeper understanding of this would benefit religious representatives, faith organisations, as well as event managers, and provide deeper meaning, authenticity and identity in the context of religious and spiritual events. Fifth, the eventization of faith is a new area of research but one that has a lot of potential for future work. Finally, understanding the use of secular spaces for religious events and sacrosanct spaces for secular events has the potential to create conflict or enhance harmonious relations. These issues and many more stand at the forefront of future research on religious and spiritual events. There remains much work to be done to understand the relationships between religion, spirituality and events.

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