# Innovation in sporting events design:
# A critical and theoretical examination

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# Abstract

Events are frequent and significant phenomena in contemporary society and academics have worked for some decades to try to better understand them. So far, event studies have investigated a variety of areas, of which event design is a significant one. Getz (2007) defined *event design* as the creation and development of event principles, and the implementation of event themes using particular techniques. For events to be successful, innovation is fundamental. Even though innovation has been identified as one of the most important factors in event design, little research on this topic has been undertaken. This research aims to provide a critical and theoretical examination of innovations in event design, with a particular focus on sporting events.

This study belongs to the category of conceptual research, which absorbs insights primarily from previous research findings, and therefore does not require the use of primary data. In terms of a research philosophy, the interpretivist paradigm is adopted, along with a social constructionist epistemology, to encourage the researcher's imagination and creativity in contributing to knowledge building. The three research processes of a scoping study, meta-synthesis, and systematic concept analysis, are also adopted.

The research results suggest that innovations in mega sporting events design are closely related to the innovative design of event spaces. Three particular space settings are identified: (1) mega-event liminal zones; (2) public viewing spaces; and (3) virtual spaces created via media platforms. Parallel comparisons of the innovative practices within the three space settings are conducted, with findings mapped into a conceptual model – revealing critical factors in sporting events design and noting the complexities inherent in the processes of innovation. The research results provide both practical and theoretical implications for the field.

# Table of contents

# List of figures

# List of tables

## Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Peixin Li

Date: 19/09/2020

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This research was conducted in a terrible year of human history. I dedicate it to the

memory of the many victims, their families, and their loved ones.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Research background

We live in a world of planned events, and because we are so attached to these events in our individual and collective lives, they have become fundamental elements of our culture, business, and lifestyles (Getz & Page, 2020). In the management literature, the concept of an event was offered by Jago and Shaw (1998) as "a onetime or infrequently occurring event of limited duration that provides the consumer with a leisure and social opportunity beyond everyday experience" (Geus et al., 2016, p. 275). To some extent, "event" is synonymous with "occurrence," "incident," and "experience" (Weidenfeld & Leask, 2013). Speciality and rarity are thus embedded in the nature of events, which form the basis of innovations in their design.

There has been a growing number of events on the global scale, ranging from mega-events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cups, whose impacts are significant to the hosting places and go beyond geographical boundaries, to the smaller-scaled ones, such as regional and community-level events (Getz & Page, 2016). In hosting an event, particularly a mega-event, the hosting nation is likely to gain substantial economic benefits in terms of macroeconomics (e.g., an upgrade of the political economy system) and microeconomics (e.g., individual consumers' or entrepreneurs' market behaviours) (Getz & Page, 2020). Furthermore, apart from direct economic benefits, more invisible and long-term impacts have been examined by event scholars (e.g. Allen et al., 2011; Getz & Page, 2020; Misener & Mason, 2006; Tjønndal, 2018). For instance, on the global level, hosting an influential mega-event enhances the positive image of a nation, whereas at the community level, a memorable event reinforces a sense of belonging to the hosting place.

More recently, research conducted in the event domain has been very diverse, including topics such as sustainable customer experience design (Smit & Melissen, 2018), event portfolio management (Antchak et al., 2019), event stakeholders (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2019), event bidding (McGillivray & Turner, 2018), and event marketing (Rinallo, 2017),

to name a few. One of the many areas of event studies is event design. According to Getz (2007), *event design* refers to the creation and development of event principles, as well as the implementation of specific themes using different techniques, such as special settings, lights, colours, and music etc. The prevalence of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory of the experience economy has further impacted on events research (e.g. Getz & Page, 2020; Geus et al., 2016; Kuiper & Smit, 2011; Morgan, 2008), underscoring that event experience should be considered as one of the key components of event offerings.

To summarise, the importance of events manifests in our everyday lives and also, in the academic world. From mega-events to local/community events, our lifestyles, business modes, and sociocultural behaviours, are constantly influenced by events. In recent decades, event academics have tried to interpret the significance and relevance of events to our lives from different angles. By reviewing their works, the development of the event industry can be easily discovered.

## 1.2. Research problem

Given that event studies have been flourishing in the recent few decades, it is not surprising to see a growing number of academic works published in the event domain. Draper et al. (2018) found that from 2004 to 2016, there were 678 journal articles published in the area of leisure/consumer events (sporting events, festivals, and other public events) and 147 in the area of business events (meetings, conventions, and tradeshows). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that with the growing number of empirical articles published, there has also been a steady decrease in conceptual studies. This indicates an imbalance in methodological approaches in event studies.

As noted, studies conducted in the event domain cover broad subtopics. Such diversity is significant and necessary, but on the other hand, certain research areas may be temporarily ignored. Event design has become one of these neglected areas. Even though the importance of innovation has been argued in many scholarly works, very little research has been published in the area (Quinn, 2013). Therefore, filling the research gaps in event design and innovation is urgent.

## 1.3. Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to conduct a critical and theoretical examination of innovations in event design and provide a comprehensive analytical framework to better understand innovation in sporting events. The research is underpinned by two research questions: (1) what are the key factors and processes of innovations in sporting events design?, and (2) how can a theoretical framework enrich the understandings of innovations within the context of sporting events?

The research objectives include but are not limited to the following:

(1)  Provide a comprehensive literature review of the existing models and theories of event design, and critically evaluate their advantages and limitations in explaining the means and ends of innovation;

(2)  Gain a better understanding of the major factors and processes that determine innovation in the design of sporting events;

(3)  Develop a holistic conceptual model by accommodating a multi-dimensional designing process of sporting events through which the innovative practices can be examined in more depth; and

(4)  Produce a conceptual model that could be applied across the wide spectrum of event typologies.

## 1.4. Research design

This research belongs to the category of conceptual research, which is based on research findings from previous studies, which are used to formulate analytical frameworks by absorbing useful insights (Recker, 2013). This research aims at maximising the researcher's subjectivity to imagine, create, and make unique contributions to theory building. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm, which highlights the subjective interpretations of social realities (Wills, 2007) is adopted. Also, this research employs social constructionism as the epistemological position, as it argues that the interpretation of social reality is largely dependent on individuals' own views (Walsh, 2012).

The overall design of this research can be explained by Leidner's (2018) descriptions of "specific theorising reviews" (p. 556) (see Chapter 2). According to him, this type of research aims at identifying research gaps in the existing literature and filling the gaps by extracting insights from a separate stream of literature with a specific focus. Therefore, three methods of a (1) scoping study, (2) meta-synthesis, and (3) systematic concept analysis, are adopted in this research in different research phases. The scoping study is mainly used to conduct the literature review (Chapter 3) and ensures comprehensiveness and inclusiveness. The meta-synthesis is adopted to deal with the research data and further theorise the research findings and analysis (Chapter 4), and the use of systematic concept analysis is predominantly manifested in the discussion (Chapter 5), especially in developing the conceptual model.

To summarise, this research is designed to maximise the researcher's subjective capability in interpreting and making sense of the social phenomena attached to sporting events design. The research methods are carefully chosen to serve the research purposes and provide practical guidance in conducting this conceptual research.

## 1.5. Significance of the study

This study is significant for the contemporary theoretical framework of event design and innovation. So far, there has been little research conducted to systematically examine innovations in any particular event typology. This research thus contributes to the building of a knowledge system within sporting events contexts. By comparing the practices of innovations in sporting events to the existing conceptual models that explain event design in general terms, the adaptability of these conceptual models can be evaluated according to specific circumstances. The innovative approaches in the contexts of sporting events can be explained and understood more deeply if evaluated using these conceptual models.

This research is very important in methodological terms. As noted previously, whereas empirical studies in the event domain have shown a steady increase over the past few decades, the number of conceptual studies has declined. Therefore, this research is meaningful, as it reflects on the basis of extant research and tries to develop novel and

critical insights. To be more specific, the research methods adopted in this research are tailored to the characteristics of conceptual research, which encourages subjectivity in explaining and interpreting social reality. Hence, the research findings are very likely to be innovative and unique.

## 1.6. Structure of the thesis

This thesis has six chapters. The first chapter, *Introduction,* introduces the research background, research problem, aims and objectives, research design, significance and importance, as well as the general structure. The second chapter, *Methodology,* unpacks the research objectives and introduces general approaches to conducting conceptual research. It also explains the choices of research philosophy, including the interpretivist paradigm and the social constructionist epistemology. Following this, the purposes, procedures, and practical uses of the three research methods are outlined. The third chapter, *Literature Review,* provides a systematic review of the literature on event design. This chapter is subdivided into two sections: event experience design, and event product design. By the end of the chapter, a comprehensive picture of event design is painted, and the research gaps identified. The fourth chapter, *Findings and Analysis* critically analyses the research data collected within the sporting events contexts. It introduces different types of sporting events and notes their advantages and challenges. It then provides a systematic analysis of the background to events from an industry perspective. In analysing innovative approaches in sporting events design, three forms of space settings are discussed in more depth. In the fifth chapter, *Discussion*, the two research questions are answered by interpreting the research findings using existing theories and conceptual models. It also discusses two relatable issues: mega-event legacy and sporting events fans. The last chapter, *Conclusion,* concludes the research findings, reflects the limitations, and outlines possibilities for future research.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the philosophy, methodology, and methods for data collection and analysis underpinning this research. The first section discusses the research philosophy, starting from a brief introduction to the defining characteristics of conceptual research. In better understanding these characteristics, it becomes clear that subjectivity is deeply embedded in this form of research. Therefore, the importance and suitability of the interpretivist paradigm are explained. In turn, this leads to the employment of social constructionism as the epistemological position.

The second section looks into how to carry out conceptual research. It outlines the three research methods adopted in this study: (1) scoping study, (2) meta-synthesis, and (3) systematic concept analysis. The scoping study is adopted to find and explore the diverse relevant research areas, so that the previously unnoticed connections may be found to provide new insights in answering the research questions. The meta-synthesis and systematic concept analysis are undertaken more for analysing the data. As different from conducting other types of secondary research, conceptual researchers are encouraged to use their imaginations in making sense of social reality, and as a result, academics prefer not to define fixed procedures (Weick, 1989). Nevertheless, this study delineates the practical steps within the methodology theories used, and identifies the precise steps to follow. A comprehensive overview of the research methodology and the procedures is provided by the end of the chapter.

### 2.2. Research philosophy

The purpose of conducting this conceptual research is to provide a critical and theoretical examination of innovation in event design, with a specific focus on sporting events. The two research questions are as follows:

(1) What are the key factors and processes of innovations in sporting events design?

(2) How can a theoretical framework enrich the understandings of innovations within the context of sporting events?

There are different ways of obtaining the answers to these questions. The approaches chosen for this study fall into the category of conceptual research. *Conceptual research* refers to the critical examinations of the research findings from empirical studies and builds theoretical frameworks by absorbing insightful ideas and concepts (Recker, 2013). According to Xin et al. (2013), *conceptual research* also refers to the mental constructions of examining and developing theories and novel ideas, and these constructions are largely dependent on the researchers' ability to create according to their own understandings. This has direct implications for philosophical decisions.

Many scholars have suggested that conceptual research is most compatible with interpretivist and subjectivist paradigms (Gray et al., 2007; Storberg-Walker & Chermack, 2007; Weick, 1989; Xin et al., 2013). Wills (2007) suggested the term *paradigm* refers to "a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field" (p. 8). The interpretivist paradigm suggests that human behaviours are largely influenced by a subjective perception of the environment, or "subjective realities" (Wills, 2007, p. 6). Hence, the implications for conceptual research lie in the subjective views of the researcher, who provides and facilitates the "imaginative, creative, and innovative leaps that give research its life" (Gray et al., 2007, as cited in Xin et al., 2013, p. 74). Furthermore, Weick (1989) argued that self-conscious manipulation of selecting non-empirical academic works is the hallmark of theory construction. Hence, this research adopts the interpretivist paradigm as it draws on the researcher's creative capacity, imagination, and critical insights, to make sense of the ways in which innovation has emerged in event design.

In terms of epistemology, which is a branch of philosophy that seeks to answers questions such as "how can we know the things that exist?" (Wills, 2007), this research employs

social constructionism. Slife and Williams (1995) clarified that the standpoint of a social constructivist should not be misunderstood as life in an imaginary world, but instead, the focus is to make sense of the real world in which we are all taking part (Pernecky, 2012). Pernecky (2012) further clarified that to avoid misunderstandings about social constructionism, one has to distinguish between social reality and the construction of meaning. According to Pernecky, social constructionism guides the construction of knowledge, which means it should be used within the collective generation and transmission of meaning process.

In addition, social constructionism argues that meaning and truth are constructed according to social processes, and are historically and culturally differentiated (Epstein, 2012). Therefore, the interpretation of social reality is socially constructed and based on a person's own views, instead of an objective reality independent of observers (Walsh, 2012). In event studies, social constructionism manifests in many ways. For example, mainstream event scholars (e.g. Getz & Page, 2020; Geus et al., 2016; Kuiper & Smit, 2011; Morgan, 2008) perceive event design as the design of event experience, which is constructed by multiple social factors, such as geographical locations, traditions and cultural norms (See Chapter 3). Therefore, this research adopts social constructionism to acknowledge that there is not a single, objective answer to innovation in sporting events. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that the contexts (i.e. event geographical location, time, culture etc.) play an important role in making sense of the practical approaches to innovation.

## 2.3. Research methodology and the three methods

Whilst methodology is commonly understood as an overall guiding approach, methods are the tools, techniques, and procedures used to collect and analyse data (Pernecky, 2012). For this research, the methodology can be unpacked using Leidner's (2018) two-dimensional model "theory-review relationship" (p. 557), which classifies review studies into four categories according to their "research objective" and "review focus. In his model, "research objective" transforms from "synthesise" to "theorise" (p. 554).

*Synthesise* means contributing to the body of knowledge by facilitating an insightful synthesis of the literature, whereas to theorise is to formulate theories on the subjects in the literature. As Leidner (2018) indicated, most research articles are somewhere in between. Likewise, this research is driven by both objectives: Chapter 3, the literature review, synthesises theories from the literature on event design, and Chapter 4, the findings and analysis, along with Chapter 5, the discussion, theorise on the basis of the findings on innovation in sporting events.

In Leidner's (2018) model, the review focus varies from "describe" to "identify trends/gaps" (p. 554). *Describe* refers to the offering of observations and insights beyond the literature itself, whereas *identify trends/gaps* means to identify research patterns and streams and uncover what is missing. Leidner (2018) suggested that trends/gaps identification requires the researcher to formulate comprehensive parameters by thoroughly examining all the relevant literature. That is to say, inclusiveness is the primary concern, otherwise, the gaps identified will not reflect the real gaps, but more the researcher's limited knowledge or understanding. This research follows the guidance of trends/gaps identification and employs the scoping study method to enhance the inclusiveness of the literature review (Chapter 3) so that the research gaps identified are accurate and solid (See section 2.3.1., Scoping study).

Leidner (2018) called research that employs theories as the main objective and trends/gaps identification as the focus, "specific theorising reviews" (p. 556). This type of research is intensified to develop theories to fill the gaps identified from a thorough literature review. To develop gap-filling theories, a researcher uses "a separate stream of literature or a separate analysis of the reviewed literature with a specific focus on extracting insights relevant to filling the gap" (Leidner, 2018, p. 556). In this research, the first round of research aims at identifying the research gaps from the literature on event design (Chapter 3) and the following chapters (Chapters 4 & 5) examine the literature on sporting events and relevant fields to fill the research gaps. In general, Chapter 3 adopts the scoping study as the research method. For Chapters 4 and 5, meta-synthesis and systematic concept analysis are adopted as the major research methods. The

following sections provide more theoretical underpinnings of the three research methods and the practices in this research.

**2.3.1. Scoping study**

**2.3.1.1. Purposes and procedures**

Perhaps the most comprehensive and earliest definition of the scoping study was provided by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). Based on their research of services to support carers for patients with mental illness, they described it as a research method that addresses broad topics which involve multiple disciplines of studies, but not as a method to assess the quality of the included studies (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The purpose of a scoping study is thus divided into two categories: first, it serves as an early stage of the reviewing process, with the ultimate goal of providing a full systematic review, and second, it disseminates the research findings from a particular research field to identify gaps in the existing evidence base (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

A scoping study is adopted in two phases of this research. First, it is used to conduct the literature review and identify research trends and gaps amongst the extant literature on event design (Chapter 3). By using a scoping study, the diversity and inclusiveness of the topics and studies covered are likely to be assured, and therefore, the gaps finally identified are expected to be convincing and accurate. Second, a scoping study is used to collect data and fill the research gaps. The literature on sporting events, sports studies and many related research fields is broadly reviewed to form the analytical basis of research findings and analysis (Chapter 4). Throughout this research, the most important and useful insight within the scoping study is the embracing of diversity. By pursuing diverse relevant study fields, the previously unnoticed links may be found so that a more comprehensive and creative conceptual analysis can be conducted.

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) identified five stages in conducting a scoping study: (1) identify the research question, (2) identify relevant studies, (3) select the study, (4) chart

the data, and (5) summarise and report the results. More detailed instructions are summarised in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Five Stages of a Scoping Study*
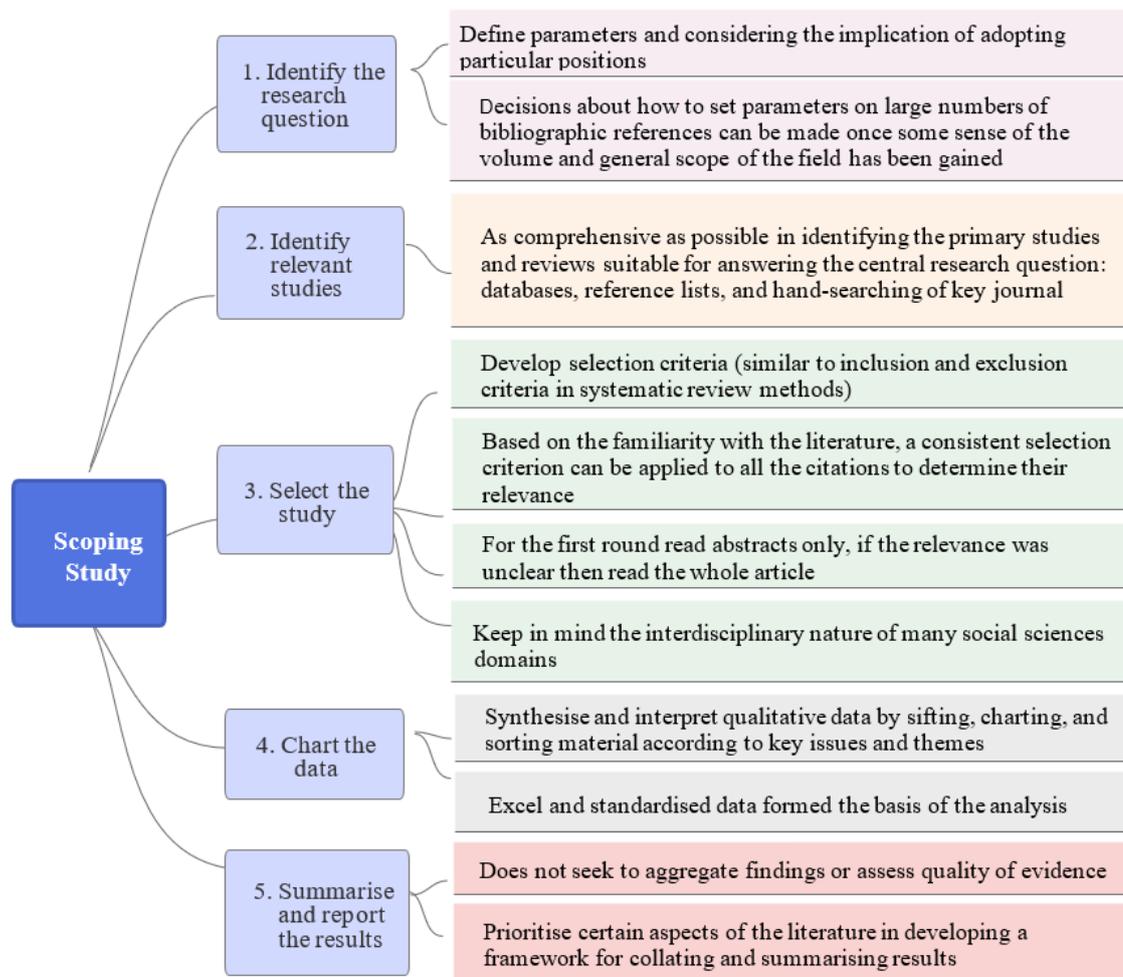


Adapted from "Scoping studies: Towards a Methodological Framework" by H. Arksey & L. O'Malley, 2005, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 8*(1), 19-32 (10.1080/1364557032000119616). Copyright 2005 by Routledge.

Even though Arksey and O'Malley have given step-by-step instructions for a scoping study, the adoption of these in this research is quite flexible. In particular, the scoping study is not perceived as a linear process, starting from the first step and ending at the

last. Instead, the multiple stages are likely to progress at the same time and strongly impact on one another. The following sections discuss the practical use of a scoping study in the literature review (Chapter 3) and findings and analysis (Chapter 4).

The diverse researching processes enable the researcher to stay open-minded and constantly inspired by new ideas and theories, whereas a chaotic situation arises with the fourth stage of "chart the data," because the key issues and themes are hard to identity; the volume of useful journal articles is enormous. Therefore, to better theorise the findings and analysis (Chapter 4), this research adopts two more research methods: meta-synthesis and systematic concept analysis. The following sections examine the theoretical backgrounds to and practical use of these two research methods.

### 2.3.1.2. Practical use in literature review

As indicated in Figure 1, the first stage of the scoping study is to identify the research question, which means defining research parameters and considering the implications. To identify the key parameters, it is necessary to read sufficient of the academic works in the field to have a basic understanding of the mainstream theories. Hence, the research starts by searching the keywords "event + design" and "event + innovation" in the databases under the category of "Event Management," including "CABI Leisure Tourism", "Hospitality & Tourism Complete (EBSCO)", "ScienceDirect", "Scopus", and "Taylor & Francis Online". Noticeably, due to the time limit and the limited scope of a thesis, this research focuses predominantly on journal articles. It was soon found that this research topic is fairly new, as most of the relevant journal articles have been published within the last decade.

As the first stage, "identify the research question" matured, the second stage, "identify relevant studies" automatically started and progressed. This stage refers to the identification of suitable academic works from databases, reference lists, and manual searches in key journals to answer the central research question(s). The key journals included: *Event Management*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality and Event Management*, *Leisure Studies*, and

*International Journal of Event and Festival Management*. In addition, the researcher searched on Google Scholar and found the function "cited by" very useful for finding articles on similar topics and themes.

The third stage, "study selection" and the fourth stage, "charting the data" reinforced each other. "Study selection" means to develop a consistent selection criterion that can be applied to all the accessible studies and decide their relevance to the research topic. "Charting the data" means to synthesise and chart data according to key issues and themes. In most cases, deciding the key issues and themes is useful for deciding the relevance of the academic works. Setting a clear and consistent criterion is also helpful for gradually shaping the major issues and themes. While conducting the literature review, many different ways of categorising the existing theories and conceptual models were tried, and finally, two key themes were identified as: event experience design and event product design (See Chapter 3 for more analysis). By charting the data according to these key themes, the literature reviewed can be sorted and interpreted more efficiently.

The final stage of the scoping study is "summarising and reporting results". Given that the main objective of conducting specific theorising reviews is to identify research gaps and trends, it was concluded from the literature review that the major gap in event design studies was the lack of a systematic and analytical research approach to any single event typology. Therefore, this research fills the research gap by exploring further the innovative event design approaches within the contexts of sporting events.

### 2.3.1.3. Practical use in findings and analysis

In addition to the literature review (Chapter 3), a scoping study is also used to collect research data (e.g. previous research findings, conceptual models, and empirical examples) for further interpretations (Chapter 4). As noted previously, the second phase of the scoping study is intended to fill the research gaps by reviewing a separate stream of literature, and in this research, it includes literature with a particular focus on the contexts of sporting events. The major difference between the two phases of the scoping study thus lies in the research ranges: the literature review analyses the theories of event design in

general, and the data analysis looks into the uniqueness of sporting events design in particular.

Compared to the first round of the literature review, the second iteration can be more targeted on explicit topics. The first three procedures (identify the research question, identify relevant studies, and study selection) are closely related to sports themes. Therefore, the same databases were searched again, but this time, with different key words. The key words of the second phase were more sport-related, for example, "mega-event + innovation," "major event + innovation," "sports events + innovation," "sporting events + innovation," "sporting events products," and "sporting events experiences" (Table 1). The results of the keyword searches were not entirely satisfying, particularly if the keywords were limited just to article titles. As in the first phase, Google Scholar was found more useful, especially the "cited in" function.

**Table 1**

*Research Records (Selected)*

|    | Keywords searched in the title of the journal article | Number of articles in total | Relevant to event design |
|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | Mega event innovation | 3 | 2 |
| 2  | Major event innovation | 2 | 0 |
| 3  | Sports event innovation | 6 | 0 |
| 4  | Sporting event innovation | 1 | 1 |
| 5  | FIFA innovation | 0 | 0 |
| 6  | Olympic innovation | 76 | 4 |
| 7  | Stadium innovation | 11 | 1 |
| 8  | Sports events social media | / | 2 |
| 9  | Public viewing | 173 | 4 |
| 10 | Mega event technology | / | 3 |
| 11 | Olympic opening ceremony | 56 | 6 |
| 12 | Olympic stadium | 164 | 4 |

The third and second steps are closely related, so there were several iterative rounds back and forth between these two steps, making these the most time-consuming steps. As Arksey and O'Malley (2005) implied, event studies are embedded in their

interdisciplinary nature. It was therefore important to try to reach as many research fields as possible to enrich the understanding of sporting events design, for example, in the sociology of sports, fan psychology, new product design, design thinking, Olympics studies, FIFA World Cup studies, mega-events legacy studies, mega-event governance, project management, financial management, human resources, stadium construction, opening ceremonies and symbolic meanings, food and beverage, and service-dominant design.

### 2.3.2. Meta-synthesis

### 2.3.2.1. Purposes and procedures

*Meta-synthesis* refers to the systematic and formal process of analysing the research products from qualitative research findings to generate overarching inductively derived claims about social phenomena (Thorne, 2008). In other words, the objective is to create a "holistic interpretation" (Jensen & Allen, 1996, p. 554). Meta-synthesis has been widely used by health sciences researchers. As Paterson et al. (2001) suggested, health sciences researchers look for more plausible, coherent, complete, and useful constructions of the social reality beyond the forms already found. In the mindset of the health sciences researchers, social construction is underpinned by the competing ideals of social responsibility, morality, and accountability. Therefore, the ultimate goal of meta-synthesis is "looking beyond, imagining something better, and contributing to a more complex and infinitely interesting scholarship" (Paterson et al., 2001, p. 112).

Paterson et al. (2001) further indicated that meta-synthesis incorporates a set of dynamic and iterative processes, including thinking, interpreting, creating, theorising, and reflecting, instead of definitive linear procedures. The process of struggling for understanding is thus highly valued and sometimes considered more important than the final answers. In addition, Paterson et al. (2001) gave three basic yet useful pieces of advice. First, to create a complete and comprehensive theory, it is impossible to avoid conflicting knowledges reflected in multiple fields, hence, the job is to find or create effective ways of handing the complex situations. Second, in synthesising the findings

deriving from different methodological and theoretical approaches, the inherent value needs to be accurately and carefully accessed, and third, apart from the prior research findings, the underlying assumptions, and the missing or understudied elements, the reason behind the lack of such studies may provide different angles for further analysis.

Even though Paterson et al. (2001) refused to define fixed procedures for conducting a meta-synthesis, their descriptions of the use of the key procedures, such as meta-data-analysis, provide practical insights. The meta-data-analysis procedure was adapted from Noblit and Hare's (1988) studies of meta-ethnography, which entailed two general steps. The first was to translate the primary research studies into one another by determining how the key metaphors of each study relate to those of other accounts, and the second, was to refine these translations until the phenomenon is described in a way that is faithful to the interpretations of the original data (Noblit & Hare, 1988, as cited in Paterson et al., 2001, p. 65). To put it simply, as the research progresses, the initial coding system that comprises the original categories and themes may be collapsed, refined, or expanded.

The common point of a scoping study and meta-synthesis is their embracing of diversity, ranging from context to methodological and theoretical approaches (Paterson et al., 2001; Thorne, 2008). Meta-synthesis pushes researchers to work with both aggregations and contradictions within the empirical studies. By dealing with the complexities within the research field, the final synthesis is expected to be able to extend beyond the scope of individual studies, and thus become valid across different temporal, spatial and epistemological contexts (Paterson et al., 2001; Thorne, 2008; Cooper et al., 2009).

According to Jensen and Allen (1996), since the goal of undertaking a mega-synthesis is to better understand and interpret a social phenomenon, the interpretivist paradigm is embedded within the method. The data to be analysed are very flexible, as they may range from a few words or paragraph to an entire research, so the researcher is in total control of identifying the meaningful data for interpreting and theorising (Paterson et al., 2001).

### 2.3.2.2. Practical use in findings and analysis

The way meta-synthetic analysis (meta-data-analysis in particular) was adopted in this research included three key steps. The first step was to hypothesise the key themes or categories to establish an initial coding system. These key themes/categories were largely based on the keywords used in the phase of the scoping study. Figure 2. shows some of the most identifiable keywords for use in searching for relevant journal articles (e.g. Olympics, FIFA World Cup, innovation, social media, fans, stadium, social media, stakeholders, etc). By the end of the first step, all the useful research findings were categorised according to this keyword coding system. As a result, the data were easy to locate, but the simple classification of data was not helpful for further interpretations, as it did not establish clear dimensions or parameters for comparing and contrasting the data. Therefore, the collected data needed to be reorganised using the following steps.

**Figure 2**

*Keywords (Selected)*



The reorganising of the research findings was accomplished by collapsing, refining, or expanding the initial coding system. As noted, a meta-synthesis is not a linear research process, but instead, it implies several iterations of thinking, interpreting, creating, theorising, and reflecting. Hence, the second step of the process in this research involved several iterations of research and analysis on the basis of the initial one.

The turning point came when Yoshida et al.'s (2013) study that introduced the conceptual framework of innovativeness in sporting events design was found. Their research was not only remarkable in theoretical terms, but also provided methodological insights, which could be adapted and used for similar kinds of studies (See Chapter 4. Section 4.3.1.). Their conceptual framework identified four main areas that innovation in sporting events design could be interpreted as: the offerings (what), the services/processes (how), the interpersonal relationships (who), and the settings (where). By adopting their conceptual framework, the original coding system was unpacked and upgraded according to the four categories suggested.

The last step of meta-synthesis in this research was to summarise the key findings and analysis according to their levels of importance. In Yoshida et al.'s (2013) model, the four major perspectives have generally been interpreted as parallel; however, it was found that in interpreting sporting events design, the *where* perspective was hierarchically superior to *what*, *how*, and *who*, because the *where* aspect unites encounters with the other three. Therefore, the findings and analysis were adjusted accordingly. Similarly to the second step, the third step also occurred in several rounds and was gradually shaped as the researcher became more and more familiar with theorising the research findings.

### 2.3.3. Systematic concept analysis

### 2.3.3.1. Purposes and procedures

The third method employed in this research is a systematic concept analysis, which has been implicitly considered as the central element of building terminological theory, particularly in the nursing science literature (Nuopponen, 2010a). According to Nuopponen (2010a, p. 6), the purpose or the definition of a concept analysis is

> to clarify the intension of a concept, its relations to other concepts and its location in a concept system and to create thus a basis for elaboration of concept definitions and reveal synonymy and equivalence between terms in different languages, etc.

Based on this definition, she continued by arguing that concepts do not exist alone but within a system where their characteristics and relations are clarified and described.

Nuopponen (2010a) compared four methods of concept analysis, within which Walker and Avant's (2004) concept analysis model suits the purpose of this research the most (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Walker and Avant's Concept Analysis Model*

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The applicable procedures are highlighted in the model: (1) select relevant and important concepts; (2) set the research goals: clarify the meaning of the existing concepts and add to the existing theory; (3) identify all uses of the concepts that can be found in the literature; (4) determine the defining attributes of the concepts; and (5) conclude the findings. Noticeably, Walker and Avant considered the "determine" step as the "heart of concept analysis" that explores the defining attributes and defining characteristics of a concept (Nuopponen, 2010a, p. 10). They also suggested that to find the defining

attributes and characteristics, it is useful to pay attention to the ones that appear over and over again in the literature (Nuopponen, 2010a).

Nuopponen (2010b) developed the concept analysis approach into the systematic concept analysis approach. She argued that a preliminary concept system that outlines the general system(s), is needed before systematically analysing the material, and it should also secure a proper understanding of the differences and similarities between the central concepts. Following that, a systematic analysis is conducted, because until then, concepts do not exist and should not be defined in isolation, hence, the relevant concepts involved have to be examined and separated according to the relationships with the central concept. For example, they can be divided into superordinate concepts, subordinate concepts and coordinate concepts (Nuopponen, 2010b). Figure 4 outlines Nuopponen's (2010b) subdivision of the systematic analysis approach, of (1) elaborating concept systems, (2) clarifying relationships between concepts, (3) comparing and contrasting the characteristics, (4) clarifying similarities or polysemy, (5) modifying the concept system(s), and (6) determining concept intentions.

**Figure 4**

*Systematic Analysis of the Material*

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The process of systematic concept analysis is not described as a successive one, but instead, various types of activities may be performed, as long as they are processed systematically (Nuopponen, 2010b). Furthermore, an interpretative analysis of the concepts should also strive to discover the reasoning behind the conceptual structures, which possibly helps to catalyse a new unexplored angle (Nuopponen, 2010b). This research incorporates a systematic concept analysis into the meta-synthesis method, trying to target the most critical concepts in developing theories and conceptual models. It also formulates the general parameters in comparing various studies, as it highlights the key points to evaluate similarities and contradictions across different research fields and philosophies.

### 2.3.3.2. Practical use in discussion

In this research, the systematic concept analysis required careful examinations of the central concepts, which were particularly useful when developing the final conceptual presented at the end of this research (Chapter 5 Section 5.3.). Furthermore, even though the identification of the central concepts is mostly presented in the discussion chapter, the processes of clarifying, selecting, and modifying started at the beginning of this research, in the literature review (Chapter 3), and progressed while researching for the findings and analysis (Chapter 4), finally finishing in the discussion chapter.

The conceptual model finally developed in this research aimed at providing a holistic understanding of innovations in sporting events design and noting the complexity within it. The purpose was to include multiple dimensions for examining innovative practices from different perspectives. In developing the conceptual model, two important concepts analysed and contrasted in the literature review were adopted: *event experience* and *event product*. By adopting these two central concepts, two types of mindsets in event design were introduced in the conceptual model: one was from the perspective of consumers, and the other was from the perspective of designers and organisers. Similarly, the most

important concept interpreted in the findings and analysis was *space*, and therefore, it was adopted as another key dimension for examining the innovative design of sporting events.

In addition, as noted by Nuopponen (2010b), to conduct a systematic concept analysis, the building of a concept system is important. Hence, after selecting the central concepts from Chapters 3 and 4, the focus was shifted to building a framework to incorporate the multiple dimensions into one big picture. This procedure again, involved several rounds of modifying the concept systems, as well as changing the prioritisations of the central concepts. The conceptual model is a manifestation of this work, and is the final and the best outcome.

## 2.4. Summary

To conclude, the methodology of this conceptual research was designed to encourage the imagination and creativity of the researcher, and therefore, the research is inherently subjective. In this sense, the interpretivist paradigm and a social constructionist epistemology best fit the purpose of this research. In addition, they helped to free the researcher from methodological constraints, and focus on evaluating the usefulness and relevance of the data. Consistent with the research philosophy, the three research methods were adopted to generate novel connections and relationships amongst the key factors that may in combination, provide answers to the research questions. The scoping study opened diverse possibilities and was used mostly in conducting the literature review, whereas the meta-synthesis and the systematic concept analysis assured systematic interpreting and theorising of the research finding. Hence, they were adopted mainly in the findings and analysis chapter, as well as the discussion chapter. Overall, the methodological tools identified in this chapter provided practical procedures for systematically evaluating existing literature on event design and innovation, and also, for holistically examining innovative practices within the contexts of a particular event typology, which in this research, refers to sporting events.

# 3. Literature review

## 3.1. Introduction

To date, event scholars have developed a great number of conceptual models and theories to interpret the essence of event design (e.g. Getz & Page, 2020; Kuiper & Smit, 2011; Morgan, 2008; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014), which also indicated potential solutions for innovation. This chapter provides a systematic and critical literature review by focusing on the designing of event experiences and event products. The first section adopts the literature that interpreted event design from the perspective of event participants and perceived event design as synonymous to event experience design. The associated theories are further divided into five dimensions: (1) correlations between experience economy and experience design, (2) co-creation of event experience, (3) event settings – space and time, (4) event stimuli – multiple layers and aspects, and (5) individuals' perception and interpretation. The second section analyses the theories that interpreted event design as the creation of event products, which showed more concern for the event designers' values. This section starts by reviewing the changing definitions of "event product" and argues that the term has transformed from purely physical to complex intangible values. Following this, the relationship between event product innovation and the event market, as well as the generators of event products' innovations, are discussed. Over the course of the chapter, a structured knowledge system of innovations in event design is built. Together with this, a research gap is identified.

## 3.2. Event design of experience

### 3.2.1. Experience economy and experience design

Many event scholars have argued that the essence of event design lies in designing the event experience (e.g. Berridge, 2008; Getz & Page, 2020; Kuiper & Smit, 2011; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). The current research trend of analysing event design from the perspective of experience design, can be traced back to Pine and Gilmore's (1999) work on the experience economy. Pine and Gilmore's study was ground-breaking because it

described a newly identified type of offering that companies could provide to their customers, that is, experience. Traditional goods and services were no longer offered for their own sake, but resulted in the desired experiences for customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to the authors, the rich sensations within goods and services were used to engage individuals in different ways and levels, hence, the experience that everyone gained in the end varied accordingly. Following that, scholars within the event domain started adopting Pine and Gilmore's theory of consumer experience and other relevant theories in the event domain. As Getz and Page (2020) indicated, Pine and Gilmore's work, as well as other interdisciplinary developments, played a key role in contextualising the application of the relevant theories to event studies. Pine and Gilmore's analysis helped to resolve the principle challenge for event researchers, that is, the complexity of participant involvement in events, their motivations, and the modes of involvement (Getz & Page, 2020).

Pine and Gilmore (1999, p. 12) observed that "whereas commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are memorable." arguing that the consumption of experiences is unique in the way that the consumption process may occur over a duration of time and is based on the engagement of certain values. They believed that experiences are inherently personal, as they are perceived on the basis of individual emotions, physical conditions, intellectual, and even spiritual levels. Therefore, the overall outcome of experience consumption derives from the interaction between a staged event and the consumers' mindsets formed prior to the event (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Pine and Gilmore's theory was later adopted by Getz and Page (2016) to develop theories and conceptual models in event studies. As they explained, event design is based on the deep understanding of participants, including their motivations, behaviours, and the key factors which may have influences on their behaviours.

In the updated edition, Pine and Gilmore (2011) continued their analysis of the approaches that companies can adopt to engage their customers. They outlined two dimensions that are important for the study of experience. In Figure 5 these are presented by horizontal and vertical axes. The horizontal dimension represents the level of guest participation, from the left to the right indicating the level of guest participation from passive to active. Passive participants are the event observers or listeners, who have little influence over the event performance. Active event participants, on the other hand, are actively involved in the event, co-creating their own experiences. The vertical dimension

shows the connection or environmental relationship between guests and the event or performance. The key word "absorb" means the event or performance occupies the participant's mind with the experience, and the term "immerse" means participants physically or virtually become a part of the experience itself. For example, while attending an event, the infield audiences are more immersed then the grandstand audiences, because they are surrounded by the sights, sounds, and even smells of the activities.

**Figure 5**

*Pine and Gilmore's Experience Realms*

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Reprinted from *The Experience Economy* (p. 46), by J. Pine & J. H. Gilmore, 2011, Harvard Business Review Press. Copyright 2011 by Harvard Business Review Press.

The coupling of the two dimensions provides four realms of experience – entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetic. Entertainment experience usually occurs when people view a performance, listen to music, or read for leisure enjoyment; educational experience happens mostly in university, where students are actively engaged in class and absorb new knowledge or skills. Alternatively, people go to business conferences, TED (technology, entertainment and design) talks or similar events to become educated; escapist, opposite entertainment, means people are actively engaged and immerse

themselves in the environment, for example, by trekking in theme parks, gambling at casinos, or playing computer games; in aesthetic experiences, individuals immerse in the event and leave without touching the environment, gaining experience by merely enjoying the aesthetic elements, which can be artificial or natural (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

The model of the four realms of experience manages to include as many potential motivations of purchasing experience as possible by keeping the principle dimensions to the simplest and most straightforward. Most importantly, Pine and Gilmore (2011) argued that the richest and most creative experience that can be designed for participants should ideally encompass aspects of all four realms, which lies in the middle of the framework, the so-called "sweet spot" (p. 58).

### 3.2.2. Co-creation of event experience

The prevalence of experience economy theory represents a new era of business model, inside which the traditional relationship between the producer and consumer has been redefined. Vargo and Lusch (2004) noted the rising of the service-centric business model and suggested that consumers were starting to get involved in the production of value. In their opinion, the service-centred dominant logic advocates consumers' participation in the defining, creating, and marketing of product value. Value co-creation enables customers to achieve higher value benefits, such as satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and self-esteem (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Binkhorst and Dekker (2009) indicated that the changing of consumer behaviour is underpinned by the philosophy of modernity, which allows people to shape their lives according to their own creativity.

Tourism and events academics have been discussing for over a decade about the definitions and implications of co-creation. Jaakkola et al. (2015), for example, described co-creation as "multiple actors creating something in interaction and collaboration with, or influenced by, other actors" (p. 187). Limburg (2008) defined co-creation as a new way of thinking, which allows product or service to be created from the bottom-up approach. In the field of event studies, Getz and Page (2020) use the idea of co-creation and liberating experiences to enrich Pine and Gilmore's theory of the level of guests'

participation. Different from Pine and Gilmore's theory which categorised entertainment and aesthetic experiences as "passive participation", and educational and escapist experiences as "active participation", Getz and Page (2020) built an "experience continuum" to extend the line of the participation level, from passive participation, to active engagement, to co-cocreation, and ultimately, to reach the goal of liberating experiences (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Getz and Page's "Experience Continuum"*

| Level 1 | Passive participation, defined by Pine and Gilmore as pure entertainment and aesthetic appreciation. |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level 2 | Engagement: participation as an athlete, performer, volunteer or organiser which requires engagement through co-creating meanings. The meanings of experiences are not purely created by the producers. |
| Level 3 | Co-creation: user innovation is taken into consideration throughout the event production process. Experience meanings are fluid as the concept and event are in progress. |
| Level 4 | Liberating experiences: formal planning is rejected for its overly restrictions and spontaneous "happenings" are highly favoured by the participants. Entertainment is perceived as a state of mind, not a production. |

Adapted from *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events* (4th ed.), by D. Getz & S. Page, 2020, Routledge. Copyright 2020 by Routledge.

Even though Getz and Page suggested that their work enriches more explicit theoretical underpinnings on the basis of Pine and Gilmore's theory, some limitations within the experience continuum theory are worth noting here. Firstly, Pine and Gilmore outlined two dimensions of participant experience engagement: "level of participation" and "environmental connection between participants and the event or performance settings,"

whereas Getz and Page's experience co-creation theory focuses only on the "level of participation" dimension, without touching upon "environmental connection.". As a result, their attitude towards Pine and Gilmore's key terms "absorb" and "immersion" is unclear. Another problem within Getz and Page's experience continuum theory is that it lacks practical indications, especially on levels 3 and 4. According to them, level 3 (co-creation) suggests that experience meanings are fluid because they are always in progress and continuously reshaped by the participants, and level 4 (liberating experiences) describes an even more idealistic situation in which formal planning is rejected and only spontaneous "happenings" are favoured. In this case, the entertainment within events exists in the minds of participants instead of as a real production. Consequently, a simple but fundamental question arises: what is the event designer's role in the process of experience co-creation and liberating if the ideal situation is to reject any kind of formal event planning?

One response was offered earlier by Limburg (2008) in his research of multiday pop festivals that focused on innovation. Similarly to Getz and Page, Limburg argued that the key element of the co-creation concept exists in the interaction between lead users, and between lead users and event organisers. Limburg's research is explicit for practical use because he provided simple but clear answers to questions about who the co-creators are, what the platform is for co-creation, and what the exact timing of co-creation is. In particular, Limburg (2008) defined *lead users* (p. 109) as the pop festival event's co-creators, whose needs cannot be fulfilled by any existent product in the market, forcing them to develop solutions for themselves. In other words, the lead users' voices represent the future trend of the rapidly changing market and the need for future products (Limburg, 2008). In his opinion, lead users are the innovators, not the early adopters.

The answers to the platform and timing of co-creation are summarised in Figure 6. The lead users of a pop festival are constantly sharing their innovative ideas within online community platforms (i.e. specialised websites), in regards to their needs, ideas, and solutions to the problems they feel (Limburg, 2008). Because multiday pop festivals

usually last for two to four days, problem-based and solution-based comments can be tracked and quickly applied as the progress continues (Limburg, 2008).

**Figure 6**

*Identification of Lead User Group*

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Reprinted from "Innovation in Pop Festivals by Co-creation," by B. V. Limburg, 2008, *Event Management*, *12,* p. 111. Copyright 2008 by Cognizant Communication Corporation.

Limburg's (2008) research findings provide clear instructions on how to implement experience co-creation theory in practice. In this specific scenario, the lead users act as event co-creators who actively participate in co-creating their own experiences. The online communication platform enables innovative ideas to be shared and adapted for further implementations. However, the fact that a pop festival lasts for several days is also an important precondition for experience co-creation to occur, because event organisers have to be given enough time to adjust and implement the lead users' requirements.

The analysis of experience co-creation highlights the participation of consumers, users, or audiences in the production section. In the field of event studies, Getz and Page considered the liberating of event experience as the future trend, however, they have not

yet provided practical guidance. Limburg's research showed in particular how multiday pop festivals manage to engage lead users into an experience co-creation process. Similar to Limburg's research, the event studies on experience co-creation are often strongly related to single cases, hence, whether or not the research insights can be generalised to larger bases remains to be assessed. In this case, for example, experience co-creation cannot be realised without the work of lead users who are skilled both technically and experimentally. To reach a certain level of maturity might be the prerequisite for event participants to become event co-creators.

### 3.2.3. Event settings – space and time

Whereas the focus in the previous section was on the innovative mindset of experience co-creation and liberating experiences, this section reviews and compares the literature that has prioritised event settings, space and time in particular, to explain how event design can shape participants' experiences.

The importance of space and time settings has been repeatedly mentioned by event scholars, especially in concluding the essence of event experiences design (e.g., Geus et al., 2016; Getz & Page, 2020; Kuiper & Smit, 2011; Pearce & Zare, 2017; Pettersson & Getz, 2009). For example, Jago and Shaw (1998, p. 29) defined events as "an onetime or infrequently occurring event of limited duration that provides the consumer with a leisure and social opportunity beyond everyday experience," and Van Vliet (2012) described events as the gathering of a crowd in a specific public place, during a delineated period, and for a unique purpose (Geus et al., 2016). Based on the common points found in various academic works, the authors argued that the study of disparate event experiences, ranging from music and sports to cultural and arts events, should be bound by space and time.

Getz and Page's (2020) model of the planned event experience (Figure 7) discusses the spatial and temporal terms of event settings and event experiences. They defined the distinct experiential "liminal/liminoid zone" by setting constraints on space and time. According to Getz and Page (2020, p. 255), event design requires a "special place," where

programming and designing of entertainment, activity and sensory stimulations are all prepared for the guests, viewers, and participants. In addition, Getz and Page (2020, p. 255) adopted Falassi's terminology "time out of time," suggesting that events should be designed to be outside everyday life, beyond routine, and unique. In general, events are created for participants to enter a special space and time set aside for special purposes (Getz & Page, 2020). To be more specific, entering special time-space settings, participants build three dimensions of experiences: the *conative* dimension of physical behaviours, the *cognitive* dimension of awareness, perception, judgement, learning, understanding, and other elements that collectively work to make sense of the event experience, and the a*ffective* dimension of feelings, emotions, preferences, and values (Getz & Page, 2009, p. 310).

**Figure 7**

*The Planned Event Experience*

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Reprinted from *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events* (4th ed., p. 255), by D. Getz & S. Page, 2020, Routledge. Copyright 2020 by Routledge.

As Figure 7 indicates, most people go to events with ideas of what is expected to happen and what the possible experiences might be (Getz & Page, 2020). That is to say, participants make their own experiences as they temporarily use the special space, and

return to their ordinary life after the event ends (Getz & Page, 2020). Reversion, on the right-hand side of the model, concludes the post-event feelings, for example, of loss, renewal, and transformation. As Getz and Page (2020) argued, it is important to let the audience feel something special at the end of an event, since they are returning to everyday life from a special space.

Similarly, Pearce and Zare (2017) described tourism, hospitality or events as "social episodes with temporal, symbolic and spatial boundaries" (p. 60), and the difference between tourism, hospitality and event domains is in the framing of the specific place and duration of time. Pearce and Zare (2017) further argued that the joint interaction of space, time, and meaning, should be explored as potentials for key junctures and decisions to make design unique and creative. Although Pearce and Zare's *Orchestra model of tourist experience* (Figure 8) aims at describing experiences in tourism, it is also meant to explain the complex coupling of experience components which may also happen in event settings.

**Figure 8**

*Orchestra Model of Tourist Experience*

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Reprinted from "The Orchestra Model as the Basis for Teaching Tourism Experience Design," by P. L. Pearce & S. Zare, 2017, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 30,* p. 59. Copyright 2017 by Elsevier B.V.

For example, at music festivals, participants are not only expecting musical enjoyment, but also food, drink, and other services; cultural festivals not only have the purpose of bringing people happiness and excitement, but they may also be perceived as a platform for learning and knowledge transfer; a sporting event, on the other hand, may represent a meaningful ritual of identity bonding in the minds of the loyal fans. Therefore, designing innovative event arenas requires designers to open their minds and include all aspects of event settings rather than single décors (Matthews, 2015).

To conclude, designing event experiences is largely decided by the settings of the liminal/liminoid zone, where multiple experience elements are expected to happen. The space-time frame is crucial in event experience planning, because it defines the uniqueness of each event in physical terms. The awareness of event boundaries is meaningful to academics and practitioners, because it enables both of them to have their attention focused and targeted.

### 3.2.4. Event stimuli – multiple layers and aspects

Tussyadiah (2014) argued that if the basis of designing is explained from the perspective of human experience and behaviour, it means that the analysing approach is fairly human-centric, and therefore, related disciplines such as psychology, ethnography, cultural sciences, and other social sciences, may be able to provide valuable insights (Tussyadiah, 2014). Hence, moving from the prior section which discussed personal event experiences within the space-time frame, this section critically reviews the theories that focused on the social, cultural, and physical contexts of events. The analysis of the environment outside the liminal zone is necessary as it provides a different research angle of event experience design.

Kuiper and Smit (2011) developed the spatial-temporal frame of event settings in their model (Figure 9) by including three layers of event stimuli within physical, social, and personal contexts. The three contexts were firstly identified by Falk and Dierking (1992) in their theory of building interactive experience; Kuiper and Smit incorporated the three core concepts within the space-time settings of events. They argued that from a physical

context, to a social context, then to a personal context, different layers of event stimuli approach closer to individuals to shape their experiences. Empirical evidence can be found in Richards's (2019) comparative study of cultural events in different places. His research showed that cultural contexts hugely impact the presenting of events in several ways, such as the event content, programming, and settings, which collectively result in variations of the eventual experiences of participants. Furthermore, in Kuiper and Smit's (2011) model, the individual experience is placed at the centre, because participants are considered to be the smallest units who interact with the surrounding contexts. That is to say, event experiences are highly subjective, because the final result depends on the reaction of individuals towards the several layers of event stimuli.

**Figure 9**

*Space, Time, Social Context, and Individual Perception*

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Reprinted from *Imagineering: Innovation in the Experience Economy* (p. 103), by G. Kuiper & B. Smit, 2011, CABI. Copyright 2011 by CABI.

Based on the theory of event stimuli, Kuiper and Smit (2011) argued that the essence of event design is based on "imagineering" (p. 4), which refers to the creative construct of meaningful and unique experiences that happen within a specific working environment. Designers who have the skills and talents of imagineering are called "imagineers" (Kuiper

& Smit, 2011, p. 4). They should be fully aware of the multiple layers and types of stimuli, for example, as in order to fulfil participants' needs for identity, imagineers need to understand the value systems and lifestyles within the social context, and try to use the meaningful event experience to ensure like-minded participants build connections and bindings (Kuiper & Smit, 2011). Imagineers should be able to link their creative ideas to the appropriate logical and rational systems and give consumers the feeling that "we are part of the brands we value" (Kuiper & Smit, 2011, p. 81). In other words, the creative job of imagineers is to facilitate certain connections out of the event experiences. Physical settings influence the overall effect because they are directly related to the regulating of participants' behaviours. The orchestrating stimuli restrict and regulate participants to behave in a certain way, but also enhance and deepen the experience for each individual (Kuiper & Smit, 2011).

To better grasp the implications of this, it is useful to consider specific examples. For example, Dashper and Buchmann (2019) recently conducted innovative research on horse-riding events, focussing on enriching understandings of event experience beyond the current scope, by including social and collective aspects. They argued that building collective event experience does not just rely on human beings, but other species as well. According to them, horses and human beings need to work together in horse riding events, to create a memorable sporting performance, and the background of landscapes and environments plays an important role in creating an enjoyable event experience for both riders and spectators. The performance of horses has always been ignored, presumably because it is difficult to observe. However, as the riders explained to the researchers, horses are usually very excited at the beginning of an event, so they need to sense any minor emotional changes in the horses to avoid potential negative outcomes (Dashper & Buchmann, 2019). More importantly, such events are helpful for the riders to establish a more meaningful and closer relationship with the horses (Dashper & Buchmann, 2019).

In summary, these studies have revealed that in addition to designing with time-space boundaries of events, it is also useful to examine events within social, cultural, and physical backgrounds, to explain the shaping of event experiences. This chapter critically

analysed Kuiper and Smit's model, which identified three layers of event stimuli within the physical, social, and personal contexts. Furthermore, Dashper and Buchman's case study of horse-riding events explained the importance of non-human factors, including the natural environment and even other species, in shaping the overall event experiences. The theories discussed in this section brought new research angles into the event field and inspired future researchers to see the larger picture where event design belongs.

### 3.2.5. Individuals' perception and evaluation

Several studies have focused on the impacts of individuals' subjectivity on their overall event satisfaction. For example, Kuiper and Smit (2011) pointed out the existence of event stimuli within personal contexts (e.g. past experiences, and personal preferences). However, few studies have offered more comprehensive explanations. In particular, it is unclear how the outside environment, such as an event setting, interacts with the internal world of individuals in forming an event experience. So far, two key models have been created by Morgan (2008), and Ziakas and Boukas (2014) to explain the underpinned factors and processes of individuals' perceptions and evaluations of event experiences.

Morgan's (2008) model, "the prism of event experience" (Figure 10) was created by adapting Kapferer's (1998) brand identity prism theory. The boxes at the top and bottom of the model include Crompton's (1979) push and pull factors that explain tourist motivations (Morgan, 2008). The pull factors are the attractions of the destination, and push factors are the personal needs of individuals to be satisfied during the visit (Morgan, 2008). The six factors in the model are listed on two sides: physical organisation, relationships, and personal benefits, belong to the externalisation category on the left side, whereas design personality, culture, and symbolic meanings, belong to the internalisation category on the right side. The prism model explains the process of how the internal and external factors of events work collectively in shaping individuals' event experiences. Firstly, the external physical operational and administrative works provide an impression of the design personality. Secondly, the social interactions that happen at the event give participants the opportunities to exchange the symbolic meanings derived by them within

their internal narrative and cultural values. Thirdly, in terms of personal benefits, the external factors, such as enjoyment, socialising, and self-development, are underpinned by a sense of integration and identification of the symbolic meanings and values of the event. The externalisation and internalisation are two parallel lines of interactions: the externalisation is more visible, tangible, and based on tangible interactions, whereas the internalisation is more invisible, and symbolic, and the *personality* of the design elements is at the core (Morgan, 2008, p. 85).

**Figure 10**

*Prism of Event Experience*

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Reprinted from "What Makes a Good Festival? Understanding the Event Experience", by M. Morgan, 2008, *Event Management, 12,* p. 85. Copyright 2008 by Cognizant Communication Corporation.

To further understand the event experience from participants' points of view, Ziakas and Boukas (2014) used phenomenology as the philosophical and methodological approach. The authors considered phenomenology as "a crucial reflection on conscious experience, rather than subconscious motivation" (2014, p. 58), hence, the starting point of

understanding event experiences and meanings attached should be around people's perceptions of an experience and the associated meanings. The model (Figure 11) they created was thus centred around event experience and meanings, and listed the process of creating events, personal influences on event experiences, perceptions of authenticity, event designs and leveraging strategies, as the main issues.

**Figure 11**

*Towards a Phenomenology of Event Experiences and Meanings*

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Reprinted from "Contextualising Phenomenology in Event Management Research: Deciphering the Meaning of Event Experiences", by V. Ziakas & N. Boukas, 2014, *International Journal of Event and Festival Management, 5*(1), p. 65. Copyright 2014 by Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Ziakas and Boukas (2014) pointed out that key point of this model is not how event experiences are designed, but to illustrate how participants perceive the meanings and significance of an event. In their opinion, the implication of phenomenology for event design is to find a means to achieve the harmonious arrangement of various event elements, so that the planned event experiences can be created and enhanced. Their research shows that the use of phenomenology provides an additional perspective for

event designers to use when planning event experiences, which suggests that innovation in event design may emerge as a new form of mindset borrowed from other disciplines.

In summary, this section reviewed the literature on event design, which embodied the central argument that event design is about experiences. Such a mindset is rooted in the era of the experience economy, hence, the first section discussed Pine and Gilmore's works on the offering of unique experiences. Another recently emerging current trend is experience co-creation or liberating experience. Such concepts were advocated by event scholars such as Getz and Page. However, practical insights are limited to single cases, which means a more systematic examination of the actualisation of experience co-creation is still needed. Following this, the spatial-temporal construct of event settings, as well as the multiple layers of event stimuli were critically analysed. On one hand, it is crucial to assure that event design stays on target, which in most cases refers to the liminal zone. However, social, cultural, and personal contexts are also important factors in designing memorable events. Lastly, the impacts of individuals' perceptions and evaluations of event experience design were unpacked using two key models that provided alternative examination perspectives of event experience design and opened new doors to innovations.

### 3.3. Event design of product

### 3.3.1. Background introduction

To date, the focus of event studies, including those of event design, has often been on participants, and many scholars have developed theories entirely from the perspectives of participants. The previous section listed some of the most representative models and theories that interpreted event design as event experience design. Even though some elements of event settings, such as the use of event space, or multiple layers of event stimuli were included in these theories, the value of event design has been predominantly assessed from a participant-centric approach. The event designers are thus considered only as providers of desired event experiences. However, over the past few years, there have also appeared many studies centring on event product design (e.g. Bladen et al.,

2017; Jackson et al., 2018; Ouwens, 2014; Richards et al., 2014). This section therefore critically reviews event theories that adopted a producer's perspective to explain the essence of event design. It commences with a brief introduction to the term "event product", and notes the changes in its meanings over time.

### 3.3.2. Event product

Getz (1989) was one of the first scholars to define "product" in the context of events. More than 30 years ago, he argued that event product refers to superficial "façades" (1989, p. 127) that are tangible, superficial, and used partially to create visitor experiences. However, he also believed that the intangible components were important as they helped to create the special atmosphere of events. Getz (1989) pointed out that to determine the value of an event product, it made more sense to situate it in the host community, that is, to assess its ability to benefit the local community. From these early narratives, a critical evaluation would suggest that "event product" has not been considered an important component of event design, as the term was commonly perceived as connoting superficiality.

In recent years, however, the definition of "event product" has become more complex. It no longer simply refers to tangible goods, but also to intangible services and ideas (Kotler et al., 2003, as cited in Hassanien & Dale, 2012). Bladen et al. (2017), for example, indicated that designing an event involves a mental creation before it takes place and the following producing actions are implemented on the basis of the original design. Similarly, Ouwens (2014) argued that the planning of the tangible and physical aspects of events stems from the process of conceptualising, directing, and realising new ideas. In other words, in designing event products, the physical settings, and the underpinned creative ideas are inseparable, and should therefore be analysed together as a package.

Rather than explaining event design based entirely on participants' feelings, more scholarly works, from textbooks to reference books, have provided practical insights in terms of event programming, planning, conceptualising, marketing, and from other perspectives, such as the management sector, financing, and human resources (Allen et

al., 2011). Thus, event producers are the ones who take responsibility to ensure the success of an event, but they also have the power to make innovative moves. Bladen et al. (2017) described the fundamental work of event designers, which is to make sure that their design runs as closely as possible to its theme. There are numerous ways of doing this. For example, they may choose unique venues to capture an event theme, while at the same time, show their imagination and innovative talents (Bladen et al., 2017). The opening night event of New York Fashion Week in September 2014 is a good example because the venue, the Irving Plaza, enhanced the event theme through its history as a rock venue (Bladen et al., 2017).

As discussed, the term "event product" not only refers to the visible setting, but also imparts ideas and values. Richards et al. (2014) argued that events act as value creation platforms in contemporary society, which includes different kinds of values, such as economic, cultural, social, creative, environmental, etc. Currently, events are one of the social activities that best fits the requirements of the knowledge economy, because they gather large numbers of people who contact one another face-to-face, facilitating the concentration, generation, and dissemination of knowledge (Richards et al., 2014). Event design in this sense is considered to depend on its "DNA," the code for growth and development over time, together with the leading strategies of event organisations, and a good "fit" with its host community, which ensures the event is "anchored" where it was born (Richards et al., 2014, p. 2). Such a value-chain illustrates the ways in which multiple event actors connect to offer event products and related services (Soteriades & Dimou, 2011).

### 3.3.3. Event innovation and the event market

Based on the theory that events should be perceived as contemporary value creation platforms, Richards et al. (2014) further argued that vision is an essential aspect of event design. According to the authors, without a vision of the future of event design, an event organisation cannot design any new products. Moreover, unless event organisers constantly offer innovation, events will quickly decline and risk becoming an unattractive

value creation platform. This suggests important correlations between event design and the event market. As Hassanien and Dale (2012) suggested, event organisations are forced by the changing market environment, to adapt, develop, and innovate, in order to sustain their competitive advantage.

Tum et al.'s (2006) model entitled "Life cycle of events" (Figure 12) further illustrates the general developing pattern of events in terms of market demand. The life cycle begins with the rising of a new idea, followed by its launching in the market, then growing in demand, gradually reaching maturity, until finally, it declines. The growth of demand of an event product is due to increased market acceptance and increasing profits, and also, during the growing period, competitors may copy or develop similar products, or develop a new market to avoid direct competition (Tum et al., 2006). The maturity stage represents the highest point of market demand when the product generates a stable income, which can last from days or weeks to many decades until decline (Tum et al., 2006).

**Figure 12**

*Life Cycle of Events*

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Reprinted from *Management of event operations* (p. 97), by J. Tum, P. Norton & J. N. Wright, 2006, Butterworth-Heinemann. Copyright 2006 by Elsevier Ltd.

In contrast, Kuiper and Smit (2011) used a different theoretical model called the "COCD box" to provide an in-depth explanation of market demand changes for events (Figure 13). The COCD box was created by Mark Raison in 1977 for the Centre for Development

of Creative Thinking, aimed at helping people come up with practical short-term solutions and long-term yet realistic ideas (Van Der Duin, 2016). The COCD matrix classifies ideas into three kinds according to two criteria of originality and feasibility. "NOW" ideas are normal and feasible ideas, which are easy to implement, are low risk, and have already been accepted by the market. "HOW?" ideas are original but almost impossible to implement, and are considered as the ideas for the future, and "WOW!" ideas meet both original and feasible criteria, and represent innovation and breakthrough that is happening at the time.

The emergence of WOW! ideas represents the start of the life cycle of events. Following this, as the ideas gradually become accepted by the market, they become NOW ideas, which are normal and feasible. In the same period, similar products are likely to be emulated so that the market share is more or less affected, and consumers might become tired of the unchangeable event product. Hence, after market demand reaches maturity, it declines. Innovative ideas are therefore essential for event survival in a constantly changing market.

**Figure 13**

*The COCD Box*

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Reprinted from *Imagineering: Innovation in the experience economy* (p. 179), by G. Kuiper & B. Smit, 2011, CABI. Copyright 2011 by CABI.

Larson (2011) conducted case studies on innovations in music festivals, and developed the model "Proactive and reactive innovation work in festivals" (Figure 14). She divided event production into two types according to correlations between the festival organisation and the market. On the left side of the model, "adaptation" refers to the process that the festival organisation uses to adapt to the market trend and changes in the complex environment of producing events. The innovations involved are thus somewhat reactive. Larson (2011) pointed out that the success of reactive innovations depends on an organisation's ability to perceive the future tendencies of the market and adjust event production accordingly. On the right side is "creative generation," which indicates that some festival organisations are ambitious, staying ahead of the market and eager to make a difference to the status quo by providing innovative products.

**Figure 14**

*Proactive and Reactive Innovation Work in Festivals*

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Reprinted from "Innovation and Creativity in Festival Organisations", by M. Larson, 2011, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 20*(3-4), p. 300. Copyright 2011 by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Larson (2011) further discussed the practices of event innovation by introducing Lundin and Söderholm's (1995) terminologies of repetitive and unique tasks. A repetitive task is

one with which actors are familiar, or have performed similar ones previously, whereas a unique task lacks predetermined actions and behaviours, so it involves more radical innovations than do repetitive tasks (Larson, 2011). According to her, event projects should provide potential for constant innovation, but in practice, they are usually perceived as repetitive, so innovations are in the form of incremental adjustments rather than radical changes. This phenomenon was summarised by Larson (2011) as the "innovation paradox" (p. 290), which happens not only in the event industry but also in other creative industries that involve product innovation. There are two possible reasons for this: firstly, new ideas need to be tested or trialled before implementation, leaving little space for additional innovation, and secondly, the high degree of professionalism in event organisations and their past experiences provide the industry with little operational or contextual uncertainty; therefore, innovations are not considered a necessity when designing event products (Larson, 2011).

Similarly, Ramadani and Gerguri (2011) developed the New Product Development (NPD) theories showing different types of innovations (Figure 15). Their findings were not aimed at explaining event product design in particular, but to provide an overview of the innovative industry. According to Ramadani and Gerguri (2011), there are two types of innovations: incremental and radical. A radical innovation focuses on developing new products, processes, or services, without prior examples, and aims at transforming the existing market or industry into a new one. Incremental innovations are created to improve the cost or features of existent products, processes, or services. Clearly, radical innovations require innovative spirits, nevertheless, practitioners and academics are more concerned with radical innovations than they are incremental ones.

**Figure 15**

*Types of Innovations*

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Reprinted from "Innovations: Principles and Strategies", by V. Ramadani & S. Gerguri, 2011, *Strategic Change: Briefings in Entrepreneurial Finance, 20*, p. 103. Copyright 2011 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Hassanien and Dale (2012) argued that truly innovative new products tend to have a higher failure rate because they are so completely new to the world. In addition, resource limitations are key barriers to NPD. For example, in designing event venues, financial resources and development costs are major constraints that prevent designers from implementing their ideas (Hassanien & Dale, 2012). Therefore, the nature of NPD is commonly presented as more incremental and problem-driven. In other words, product innovations are generally reactive and small scale (Hassanien & Dale, 2012). Some scholars have shown a relatively positive attitude towards budgetary constraints. For example, Jackson et al. (2018) indicated that problem-solving practices may also provide innovative insights.

To date, the event studies that discuss the relationship between innovations in event design and the event market, have clearly illustrated the importance of originality. Tum et al.'s (2006) model of the life cycle of events shows that the changes of market demand to any event product are accompanied by market acceptance of the innovative idea. However, Kuiper and Smit (2011) used the COCD box to clarify different types of event

products to compare their relative competences. For event producers, the positioning of event products in a market needs to be considered carefully, because this decides the long-term strategies. The reliance on innovation for event organisations is apparent, however, the creation of a new event product is fairly difficult in practice. Therefore, most event organisations have chosen to adapt to market trends instead of generating completely new products. Scholars such as Larson (2009) have given several reasons for this, including that past experience and high levels of professionalisation can act as counterforces. Similarly, Ramadani and Gerguri (2011) analysed new product development in the creative industries and concluded that incremental changes are easier and less risky than radical changes, hence, firms prefer to adopt incremental strategies.

The theories reviewed in this section are useful for explaining different market behaviours. Event organisations embrace different attitudes towards innovation, either proactive or conservative, however, the availability of innovative spirits and actions determines their relative positions in the event market, as either leaders or followers, which further determines their competence in the long run.

### 3.3.4. Event product generators

In the event experience design section, some theories of experience co-creation were discussed and they have put the focus on participants. However, the term "co-creation" also implies that participants cannot create experiences just by themselves, which means the analysis of event generators is not complete without examining event producers' and designers' roles. Slack et al. (2004) developed the model "Influences on the design of an event" and identified the roles of internal and external resources in generating new concepts and ideas (Tum et al., 2006, p. 108). Internal sources include three aspects: staff in contact with customers, staff's ideas, and research and development (Tum et al., 2006). Staff are believed to generate new ideas either from previous experiences or through communicating directly with customers, and in addition, within an event organisation, there is usually a special group of employees set up to do research on new knowledge and develop new products based on that (Tum et al., 2006). External sources include

customers, suppliers, and competitors. In practice, listening to external voices is also important, because they are potentially useful in helping future progress.

Larson (2009) conducted a longitudinal study from 1998 to 2004, on three music festivals, the Great Lake Festival (GLF), the Gothenburg Party (GP), and the Malmö Festival (MF), to see how festival renewal was carried out. She argued that traditional ways of interpreting the event product generators are no longer valid in the contemporary environment. For example, Woodman et al.'s (1993) conceptual framework that linked creative persons, processes, situations, and products, in a linear shape is outdated. According to Larson (2009), it makes more sense to interpret the event organisation as a project network to understand its inner complexity. The project network means that no single actor is legitimate or authorised to make decisions for the network as a whole. Therefore, within the network, power relations, the ability to influence other actors in decision making, as well as the trust and shared beliefs between one another are perceived as the key concepts. She further identified seven central actors in the innovation process: allies and other festivals, the local public and local people with specialist skills, clubs and other voluntary organisations, restaurants and market vendors, sponsors and sponsor's agents, local firms, and public authorities (2009, p. 300).

The different attitudes on innovation in these three festivals were thoroughly discussed using the project network theory. Firstly, GLF was found to be the most proactive in innovation and tried to be ahead of the market, whereas MF and GP were more conservative and preferred to adapt to the local market and keep the event's traditions (Larson, 2009, p. 296). The difference in attitudes towards innovation was due to ownership; GLF was a privately owned event, whereas the other two were municipality owned. Municipality-owned events are more conservative in relation to making changes, because decision-making involves complex actors within the network. Secondly, Larson (2009) described the network as a "political market square" (p. 300) that generates conflicts, and usually public authorities are perceived as powerful constraints to novel ideas. Thirdly, not all the actors within the networks are pro- innovation; instead, some may act as counteractors. For example, some sponsors may request services from

particular suppliers and block corporations with better services (Larson, 2009). In order to make the festival networks generate innovations, an open-access network that allows new components to participate in the festival production is needed. Open access provides alternative components and approaches to produce events, but should also be controlled and selected to form long-term relationships (Larson, 2009).

To conclude, discussions about event stakeholders are not only meaningful in human resources terms, but also involve several issues, such as value co-creation, cooperation modes, battles of power for decision-making, finance, and so on. Slack et al. (2004) divided event ideas generators into two types: the internal type includes staff and their resources, and the external type consists of customers, suppliers, and competitors. In contrast, Larson (2009) developed her theory from observations on the planning processes of music festivals. According to her findings, event organisers are usually composed of various sectors, and co-exist in particular networks. The battle of power in decision-making sometimes results in conflict, so an open-access network is needed to ensure the event production progresses in a positive direction. Noticeably, Larson's analysis is entirely based on the designing of music festivals, so her research findings regarding stakeholders' participation may be limited.

## 3.4. Summary

This chapter critically reviewed the theories of event design, particularly the conceptual models that summarise the major issues of innovations. The first section located the design of event experience against the background of the experience economy, and argued that innovations can be achieved by combining diverse genres of experiences. Following that, recent theories of the co-creation of experience, as well as experience liberating, were critically analysed. Such theories are inspiring in-so-far as participants are more empowered, although they lack detailed practical guidance. Even though empirical evidence of event experience co-creation has been found in some studies, such as the case study of the multi-day music festival, the generalisation of experience co-creation theory has to be further explored. In contrast, many scholars preferred to focus on the design of

the event liminal zone, whose boundaries are defined in spatial-temporal terms. Moreover, other event scholars have enlarged the boundaries of events and incorporated stimuli from the physical, social, and personal contexts, to shape individuals' event experiences. The last dimension of the first section focused on individuals' perceptions and evaluations of event experiences, as they are the smallest units that react to and interact with the outside surroundings.

The second section reviewed the literature on event product design. The changing definitions of the event product were reviewed first. A clear trend was evident of event products that were once interpreted purely as tangible goods, towards including more intangible elements, such as original ideas and services. In other words, designers and organisers need to integrate both tangible and intangible aspects in designing events. Following the review of definitions, the relationship between event innovation and the event market was discussed. The rise and fall of the life cycle of events was explained by the changing of market attitudes towards the raw ideas within the design. To be more specific, two types of relationship were identified between event organisations and event market. The first is that event organisations adapt to the market trends, and the second, is that event organisations create and generate new market trends. The chapter ended with the generators of innovations in event design. The insiders within the event organisations and the outsiders, such as event participants, both contribute in their own ways. Meanwhile, the battle of power exists within the network of event stakeholders, which may generate both positive and negative impacts on event design.

The literature published so far has covered many approaches to event design, and provided diverse pathways to innovations. Nevertheless, most of these academic works have been concentrated on event design in general terms and lack in-depth analyses tailored to a single event typology, such as sporting events, music festivals, and artistic events. This chapter has provided a broad overview of the key frameworks, issues and challenges with regard to event design and innovation in general. The research component of this thesis will put these to test and further examine the practical insights. The

following chapters focus on analysing innovations in sporting events design and exploring its unique factors and processes.

# 4. Findings and analysis

## 4.1. Introduction

In the literature review chapter, the key theories and research findings on event design were reviewed and critically analysed, but without touching more in-depth on the specific settings of any particular event typology. This chapter steps forward to explore innovations in sporting events design. First, it provides a general overview of the typologies of sporting events, along with a broad introduction of the advantages and disadvantages of each typology. Second, it draws on Yoshida et al.'s (2013) conceptual framework in order to systematically analyse innovation in sporting events. Third, the major findings with close relations to the design of "space" are analysed. The goal of this chapter is to provide a creative and systematic analysis of innovative approaches in three forms of event spaces: (1) mega-event liminal zones (stadiums), (2) public viewing (PV) events, and (3) virtual media spaces. In methodological terms, in addition to the three research methods introduced in Chapter 3 (i.e., scoping study, meta-synthesis, and systematic concept analysis), this chapter adopts Yoshida et al.'s conceptual framework. A holistic understanding of innovation in different sporting events space settings is provided by the end of this chapter.

## 4.2. Sporting events typologies

Before discussing sporting events typologies in-depth, it is useful to stand back and situate sporting events within the bigger picture of special events. Special events were defined by Getz (2005) as the "one-time, or infrequently occurring event outside the normal program or activities of the sponsoring or organising body" (Allen et al., 2011, p. 12). As a particular form of special events, sporting events are subdivided into categories in a similar way to that of special events. Allen et al. (2011) argued that the size and scale of impacts (i.e. attendance, media profile, infrastructure, costs, and benefits) are commonly used to characterise special events; therefore, common categories include mega-events, hallmark events, major events, and local/community events.

The definitions of event typologies are inexact, and distinctions may be blurred (Allen et al., 2011), but it is nevertheless useful to delineate the terminology. In the management literature, mega-events are exceptional, as they have been termed in clear quantifiable terms. Getz (2005) argued that a mega-event indicates that "volume should exceed one million visits, their capital costs should be at least $500 million, and their reputation should be that of a 'must see' event" (Allen et al., 2011, p. 13). Allen et al. (2011), as well as Getz and Page (2020) further argued that mega-events, in the strict sense, include just three cases: the Olympic Games, FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cups, and World Fairs. In other words, other types of special events should not be included in the mega-event category.

One of the challenges of event terminology is that apart from mega-events, the smaller-scaled special events have not been given clear definitions with quantitative criteria. According to Allen et al. (2011), "Hallmark Events" refers to events that are "so identified with the spirit or ethos of a town, city or region that they become synonymous with the name of the place and gain widespread recognition and awareness" (p. 13). Major events are defined as those that are capable of attracting significant visitor numbers, media coverage, and economic benefits (Allen et al., 2011), or those of regional significance in terms of media attention and economic growth of the host place (Tjønndal, 2018). Community or local events are described as community-produced events primarily targeting local participants for social, fun, and entertainment values (Allen et al., 2011). Despite the lack of substantive details, for example, the meaning of "significant," or the size of "community," a rough image of different typologies of special events is presented.

In the sports literature, in a similar way to the categorisation of special events, sporting events are commonly subdivided according to the size and scale of impact. Gratton et al. (2000) proposed a four-scaled division of sporting events: mega-events (e.g. the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cups), major events (e.g. Wimbledon and Super Bowl), irregular major sporting events (e.g. international swimming events), and other major sports competitions driven by the competitors such as college championships (Gibson et al., 2012). Their analysis indicated that sporting events are highly diverse and the impacts

can vary from those on small communities to the entire world.

It is worth noting that every sporting event typology has its uniqueness, or in other terms, its advantages and challenges. Mega sporting events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cups, are driven by the goals of various sectors, such as media specifications, sponsors' needs, community expectations, and government objectives (Gargalianos et al., 2015). Commonly, they are expected to bring benefits to the host country, for instance, to serve as a catalyst for urban regeneration and new infrastructure development. However, the large size of the games usually results in over-construction of infrastructures; substantially more than what is actually needed by the host (Müller, 2015).

In contrast, hallmark events are driven by different goals and thus have different characteristics. Getz and Page (2020) argued that they are "authentically embedded in a particular place or culture" (p. 62), hence, they are important recurring events capable of providing and feeding place image, identity, and branding. The uniqueness of hallmark events was identified by Penny and Redhead (2009) in their case study of the Manchester City Football Club. Their findings showed that football matches are embodied within the local culture and identity, which explains why a football club is favoured and supported by its local fans. Other scholars, such as Misener and Mason (2006), tried to interpret the value of sporting events from the perspective of the local community. Their studies were conducted to determine how to build social capital by hosting sporting events. In this sense, small-sized sporting events are more likely to let residents get involved in the designing and producing processes, which may benefit the local community more directly and efficiently than larger-sized events.

To summarise, sporting events can be categorised according to their size and scale, media coverage, and attachment to their host place. From mega-events to community-level events, overall impacts may be delivered to different scales of population, but the benefits, challenges, and innovation opportunities vary according to the situation.

## 4.3. Innovation in sporting events: background analysis

### 4.3.1. Yoshida et al.'s conceptual framework

Understanding the different event typologies is useful for examining innovations in sporting events, but before discussing the practical approaches more in-depth, it is useful to look at the background of the sporting events industry, and gain a holistic understanding of the innovation possibilities. To achieve this, the use of a conceptual framework is needed to ensure that the analysis is systematic and comprehensive.

Event scholars have proposed several frameworks, which provide certain insights for conducting conceptual analyses in event design. Nevertheless, most have limitations in terms of synthesising all the relevant dimensions, as they tend to analyse particular segments of a larger picture. For example, Emery's (2010) model illustrates three key determinants of sporting events success: sport (i.e. knowledgeable staff and in-depth planning), funders (sufficient and appropriate management of finance), and media (p. 163). A different framework by Bury (2016) concentrates on managing a crowd, hence, in his model, three key variables of the planning process are "number of participants," "resistance to crowding, and "level of diversification" (p. 380). Yet another framework by Kiuri and Teller (2012) examines key design factors by investigating the relationship between urban environment and stadium configuration. Accordingly, their model includes the associated indicators, such as sustainable design, adaptive reuse, cultural significance, and periodisation (p. 126). These conceptual frameworks provide theoretical and practical insights; however, the scope of these frameworks does not reflect the entire picture.

In contrast, Yoshida et al. (2013) provided a more holistic picture by looking into different dimensions of the sports industry. Their model (Figure 16) includes the key dimensions of conducting a holistic background analysis of sporting events design. The model identifies four major dimensions: first, the offerings that the sports team provides (what); second, the service processes (how); third, the event's settings (where); and fourth, the relationships built between the teams and consumers (who).

**Figure 16**

*Conceptual Model of Consumer-Focused Sport Event Innovativeness*

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From "Sport event innovativeness: Conceptualization, measurement, and its impact on consumer behaviour" by M. Yoshida, J. D. James & J. J. Cronin Jr., 2013, *Sport Management Revie*w, *16*, p. 70. Copyright 2012 by Elsevier Ltd.

Notably, their research was based on the consumer's perspective as they considered the consumer-focused approach the most powerful way of producing experiential products. Nevertheless, the purpose of this research is to embrace both the consumers' and producers' perspectives, which is different from Yoshida et al.'s approach. The following section reviews the background of sporting events design and innovation from the key dimensions identified by Yoshida et al.

### 4.3.2. Multi-dimensional innovations

### 4.3.2.1. *WHAT* and *WHO*

The offerings of sporting events are very specific when compared with other event

typologies. Yoshida et al. (2013) pointed out that sporting events consist of two types of performances: skill performance and thrill performance. *Skill performance* means the staged performance of skilful players on the field in a naturalistic and unpredictable manner, whereas *thrill performance* refers to the staged performance that actively engages participants to enjoy a sense of excitement. Hence, the authors conceptualised sporting events as the combination of the skills of athletes and the thrills of consumers. To be more specific, the professional skills of athletes activate the thrill feelings of consumers, and in turn, the excitement of consumers passes on to the athletes and motives them to perform on a higher level. Therefore, the theory also indicates a close relationship between sports teams (athletes) and fans. This has direct implications for the *who* dimension in the model.

Recent academic works have further examined the techniques being used in practice to improve the skilful aspect of sporting events, or in Yoshida et al.'s terms, the skill performance. The European Platform for Sport Innovation (EPSI) (2016) noted that the enhancement of athletic performance is the result of continuous innovation in multiple supporting areas, such as equipment, training, nutrition, and clothing. These innovations indicate that sports competitions have become the catalyst for the development of many applied sciences such as textile technology, mechanics, new materials, sensors, etc. (EPSI, 2016). This positive circle of innovation ensures the continuous growth of new technology applications in sporting events and daily trainings.

The application of new technologies is visible in certain cases, for example, the clothing of athletes in the modern Olympic Games, is largely different from earlier times. New material clothing has improved the competitiveness of athletes by reducing resistance in water and allowing more freedom of movement, which also reduces the risk of injury (Cheung et al., 2003; Kinchington et al., 2012, as cited in EPSI, 2016). However, the adoption of some technical tools is rarely observed by event audiences, such as, for example, the widely used sports video analysis software. The classification of video sequences in tactical patterns has been used to ensure that everyday training is targeted to the most critical points, and can assist with tactics settings for sporting competitions (Petrović et al., 2015).

To summarise, the offerings (*what*) of player performance, decides the quality of games. Furthermore, the players are amongst the most influencing parts of the relationships between sports teams/clubs and fan communities. Therefore, the interpretation of the relationships (*who*) is closely related to the offerings (*what*). It is important that event planners are fully aware of the underpinning knowledge of the sports industry, because this knowledge can inspire the design of innovative sports events.

### 4.3.2.2. *HOW*

In addition to the offerings of sports events, as well as the relationships between sports teams and fans, service delivery provides another aspect of examining innovation opportunities in sporting events. Yoshida et al. (2013) called this "process innovativeness" in their conceptual framework. The novelty and uniqueness of service process are judged by consumers' perceptions in support of their presence and time (Berry et al., 2006, as cited in Yoshida et al., 2013).

Within the contexts of sporting events, accessible self-service technology is particularly necessary for consumers, because employee assistance is usually limited (Yoshida et al., 2013). A practical example was given in Malott et al.'s (2015) case study of the "Experience LLC" company that developed a mobile phone application to sell in-game seat upgrades during sporting events. The application charges a fee for the service to upgrade empty seats (from no-shows and unsold seats) after the beginning of the game, and the whole transaction process takes only 14 seconds. It is easy to understand how much this application is favoured by users, because every second of a sporting event can be extremely intense, so spectators are likely to become anxious if they are in danger of missing an exciting moment.

### 4.3.2.3. *WHERE*

So far, this section has examined three dimensions of Yoshida et al.'s conceptual framework: *what*, *who*, and *how*. The *where* dimension was not discussed in this section, because it is hierarchically above the other three dimensions as it gathers the encounters

of the offerings (*what*), the services (*how*), and the people (*who*) in the particular event settings. More importantly, unlike the other three dimensions, which can be fully observed or experienced physically, the settings of many sporting events are highly symbolic and thus convey complex meanings. Therefore, the background analysis section stops here, and the next section discusses more in depth, the spatial settings of sporting events, that is, the *where* dimension of innovation.

## 4.4. The answer to *WHERE* – space imagination

Designing innovative sporting events is sophisticated, because it requires event organisers or designers to be able to coordinate different elements: the offerings (*what*), services (*how*), and participants (*who*), according to particular event settings (*where*). That is to say, the creativity manifest in sporting events is rooted in the imagination around the use of particular spaces. In practice, different space imaginations result in different genres of sporting events design.

Mega sporting events, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cups, are the best examples to show the importance of space imagination in event design. In theory, they are recognised as the largest special events; however, as with other types of special events, they are constrained by spatial-temporal boundaries. In particular, event scholars have pointed out that the fixed duration of the Olympics and the FIFA World Cups are nearly impossible to change (Brown & Cresciani, 2017; Müller, 2015). Nevertheless, no clear restrictions seem to impose on the spatial dimension. Therefore, space imagination may serve as an inspirational trigger of creativity. The meaning and actualisation of space imagination in mega sporting events can be unpacked and evaluated in specific circumstances. The following sections discuss three types of mega sporting events settings: Space A: Mega-event liminal zone (stadiums); Space B: Public Viewing (PV) events; and Space C: Virtual parallel space.

### 4.4.1. Space A: Mega-event liminal zone (stadiums)

To better understand the design of sporting events liminal/liminoid features, it is

necessary to briefly introduce the definition. The term "liminoid" was developed by Turner (1982) from the anthropology term "liminality," which explained "the phases in the tribal ritual processes where an ambiguous state is created by participants" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 495). Turner (1982) worked with the original sacred meanings to develop a more secular term, so that "liminoid" could be used more broadly to describe a temporary state during political or cultural changes (Lee et al., 2016). In other terms, liminality exists outside the "systems of classifications that normally establish the situations and positions of the cultural space" (Turner, 1988, as cited in Rodríguez-Campo, 2020, p. 231). As a liminoid place involves the participation of individuals, the term "communitas" (Turner, 1982) was created to describe the temporary state of communal human relationship, or the special sense of togetherness and social identity within a special group (Lee et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Campo, 2020).

In event studies, Getz and Page (2020) created the model of the planned event experience using the term "liminal/liminoid zone" (p. 255). Within the model, happenings of events were defined as "time out of time," in "a special place" (p. 255). In mega sporting events, either the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cups, "liminal zones" commonly refers to the event stadiums. Such buildings are understood as the representation of "objects" and "icons" (Kiuri & Teller, 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that both mega-events practitioners and academics have interpreted the liminal zone as the centre of innovation in design (Hong et al., 2019).

Innovations that concern the designing of a mega-event liminal zone or stadium can be systematically understood using Yoshida et al.'s conceptual framework. The following sections of *what*, *how*, and *who*, in combination comprise the larger picture of *where*. As noted in previous sections, the designing of mega-event stadiums can be highly symbolised, and therefore, the *what* dimension is divided into two parts, with the first part focusing on symbolic offerings, and the second part, on physical offerings.

### 4.4.1.1. *WHAT* – Symbolic offerings

So far, the innovations and imaginations manifested in the liminal zone (stadiums) can be

explained with Yoshida et al.'s (2013) theory, which outlined a basic principle; the key to innovations in sporting events is to visualise or make tangible the intangible elements. In most cases, iconic stadiums are perceived as the visualisation of two aspects of intangible elements: the themes and values of the mega-event, such as "the spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play" for the Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee, 2019, p. 11). Alternatively, they act as representations and symbols of the host countries (Zou & Leslie-Carter, 2010). Different host nations perceive and prioritise intangible elements in different ways, resulting in diverse manifestations of stadiums, such as the outlooks, the storytelling, or the names and the meanings. The symbolic meanings are fundamental to the design of a mega-event liminal zone, because they are the origin, the core, and the soul of a mega-event.

One of the best examples of the stadium design that embodied symbolic meanings is found in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The main stadium, "Bird Nest" used the concept of biomimicry and was constructed in a weaving style, which made the stadium look like a bird nest, whereas the aquatics centre, the "Water Cube," was designed with an organic look of soap bubbles (Rogers et al., 2008). As symbols of modern China, neither stadiums was designed in a traditional Chinese architectural style, nor in the monumental communist style, but instead, they were modern and stylish (Zou & Leslie-Carter, 2010). The message delivered through the innovative design was two-dimensional: first, it expressed the theme of the mega-event, to build connections between human beings and nature (Rogers et al., 2008); second, it epitomised the radical changes that had been occurring for decades in China prior to the Olympic Games.

To summarise, in mega sporting events, incorporating symbolic values within the design of the main stadium has been widely used to enhance the concept of a liminal zone. By visualising diverse elements, the innovations and creativity of the hosting places are shown to the world.

### 4.4.1.2. *WHAT* – Physical offerings

In terms of the physical offerings of mega-event liminal zone (stadiums), the 2012

London Olympic Games have been interpreted as an example of providing diversified choices to the event goers. The three major stadiums of different styles were compared in Smith et al.'s (2017) studies: (1) Wimbledon, which was built before the Olympic Games and had a long history of hosting sporting events; (2) Aquatics Centre, a new and purposely built stadium for the Olympics; and (3) Greenwich Park, the temporary arena that would not exist after the Olympics ended.

The research suggested that the historical stadiums, such as Wimbledon are able to bring positive effects on the event spectating experiences; however, the event goers felt more strongly attached to the symbolic aspect of the Aquatics Centre, presumably because it was newly built for the Olympic Games. The design of the Greenwich Park also turned out to be successful for its close relations with the host city's natural landscapes. The differentiated genres of venues are more likely to meet the needs and preferences of different groups of audiences. The diversified choices are also enhancing the richness of the event experiences.

### 4.4.1.3. *HOW*

In addition to physical constructions, mobile communication technologies have also been used to improve service standards, which provides insights into the *how* dimension. Frascolla et al. (2017) conducted research on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and mentioned several innovative actions taken by the host city. For example, the new national stadium, which will be used for the opening and closing ceremony, is expected to contain 60,000 people, and as the spectators walk through the six entrance gates, they can scan and download event-specific applications to see event schedules, related videos, and check athletes' profiles. Augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) is a creative application that enables spectators to watch an event from different positions within a stadium. The AR system can combine videos from differently positioned cameras and reconstruct the interactive visual experience according to the user's preferences. Any sense of being stuck in one place in a giant arena is expected to be eliminated by this new and flexible virtual experience.

Nevertheless, scholars such as Naraine et al. (2020) expressed concern about the violations to and interruptions of event spectating, caused by mobile technology. They conducted a case study on free wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) usage and behaviour of consumers during the NBA (National Basketball Association) games. Their research showed that those opposing mobile technologies found the free Wi-Fi rather distracting, whereas those who embraced it, enjoyed the free Wi-Fi much more, or could use their own cellular data covered by monthly or weekly mobile service plans. According to the research results, the vast majority of spectators logged in for no more than 15 minutes, and most, for just five to ten minutes. Based on these findings, Naraine et al. (2020) argued that "Wi-Fi at sport events is superfluous" (p. 219), especially if comparing the direct revenue with the cost of installation.

A comparison of attitudes towards mobile technology reflects the different mindsets of process innovation, or the *how* question of service delivery. The Tokyo Olympic organisers embraced process innovations such as the AR/VR system as a bonus to provide spectators more viewing options from different angles. Instead of perceiving it as a distraction to the spectating experience, the designers believed that the added service would enhance the thrill and excitement of a liminal zone. In contrast, in the case of NBA games, academics and practitioners were concerned about the installation of free Wi-Fi. An explicit concern was the lack of evidence at the time, to show that installing free Wi-Fi would help increase direct revenue. Although opinions on process innovation (e.g. mobile communication services) are sometimes conflicting amongst academics and practitioners, the *how* dimension is crucial for sporting events design and reflects the general mindset of event designers.

### 4.4.1.4. *WHO*

The last dimension of Yoshida et al.'s (2013) conceptual framework concerns people (the *who* dimension). According to their theory, innovations in sporting event experience are rooted in the close relationships between sports teams and their fans. The *who* dimension manifests the concept of experience co-creation in sporting event contexts, because sports

fans can participate in designing event experiences. An example of this was included in Penny and Redhead's (2009) case study of Manchester City Football Club's home stadium relocation. They observed that even though the new stadium was modern and multifunctional, there was a lack of place attachment in the minds of the fans. In other words, the physical requirements were fulfilled, but the symbolic values were lost. Hence, the football club managers negotiated with the fans and adopted some of their creative ideas. These included, for example, creating a singing section at the new stadium, getting the club to put on a "scarf day" during their derby match against Manchester United, changing the music played at the stadium to be more Manchester-style, and adding more banners and flags to the inner spaces etc. (Penny & Redhead, 2009, p. 759). From a theoretical perspective, this process of involving customers in decision-making is known as "co-creation" (Grönroos, 2011).

The co-creation of event experiences can be further explained by Rogers' (2003) theory of "innovation adoption," which refers to

> the process by which the adoption of innovation by member(s) of a social system is communicated through certain channels and over time triggers mechanisms that increase the probability of its adoption by other members who have not yet adopted it. (Hong et al., 2014, p. 72)

The participation of sports fans in event experience design is not only inspiring, but also represents the shifting of their roles, from those who received innovations, to those who created them.

To conclude, designing mega-event liminal zones (stadiums) requires a holistic planning of the offerings, services, and participation of spectators. Different event organisers may prioritise different aspects, and the associated debates are a reminder that innovations in mega sporting events rely on open-minded attitudes and the ability of space imagination.

### 4.4.2. Space B: Public viewing (PV) events

Even though the key innovations of mega-events, such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cups, are found to be closely related to the liminal zone - the stadiums, - it is also

helpful to look at alternatives, particularly those involved with the creative use of space. This section continues with the analysis of space imagination and discusses the newly developed public viewing (PV) events. Consistent with the prior section, Yoshida et al.'s four-dimensional framework is used to conduct a systematic analysis of PV events from *where*, *what*, *how*, and *who* perspectives.

### 4.4.2.1. *WHAT*

The first PV event was developed during the 2006 Germany FIFA World Cup as a novel proposition for watching the football games (Woratschek et al., 2017). The idea was to organise the collective viewing of sporting events and live broadcasts on large screens; therefore, the space choice was relatively flexible providing it was sufficient for a large number of people to watch together (Haferburg et al., 2009; Woratschek et al., 2017). Strictly speaking, the PV events were independent of FIFA World Cup events, because they were held at different liminal zones in the space sense. Nevertheless, the live broadcasting of the events, the enthusiastic atmosphere, and the fans' collective behaviours, closely aligned the PV events with the FIFA World Cup games.

Although PV events are capable of offering a "stadium-like atmosphere" (Woratschek et al., 2017, p. 3), the differences between PV event experiences and stadium spectating experiences are apparent (Haferburg et al., 2009). The circular architecture of stadiums creates a particular atmosphere based on the arrangement of the seats, and draws attention from every angle; hence, spectators are more likely to feel they are building connections with the games and the players. Whereas in PV events, the flat representations on screen remove the interactions and create a sense of detachment (Haferburg et al., 2009).

### 4.4.2.2. *WHO*

PV events are spectacular in the "who" dimension because they have brought real benefits to the World Cup fans. Woratschek et al (2017) pointed out that FIFA World cups are so popular around the globe and they attract enormous numbers of domestic and international spectators; however, the lottery system for selling tickets bring trouble to

large groups of foreign sports fans as they are unlikely to enter the stadiums together. Under such circumstances, the PV events are the best options to enjoy the games. Moreover, the PV events usually do not offer fixed seats so that fans have the chance to interact with others and enjoy intercultural contacts along the whole process. To the visitors who are not that interested in the football games, the PV events provide alternative attractions other than viewing the event itself (Haferburg et al., 2009). Compare to the stadium spectating experience, which allows spectators to build direct connections to the game and the players, PV events are more likely to build connections amongst the fans, as they are given more opportunities to interact, communicate, and share similar thoughts and enthusiasms.

### 4.4.2.3. *HOW*

The contributions of PV events are also remarkable if interpreted from a service dimension. Empirical evidence from the 2010 South Africa FIFA World Cup showed that the goal of hosting the PV event was not limited to the collective spectating of sports games, but more importantly, the organisers aimed at enhancing fans' experiences in a comprehensive manner (Eisenhaur et al., 2014). During the PV events, diverse consumption activities were designed to overwhelm the fans, with food and refreshment stalls, arts and crafts, official branded merchandise, popular local bands, entertainers, and DJs (News24, 2010, as cited in Eisenhaur et al., 2014). In this sense, PV events function as platforms/stages for activities to happen spontaneously (Haferburg et al., 2009). The inclusiveness embedded in the PV events guaranteed a constant attractiveness to major stakeholders such as entrepreneurs in the service industry, the gathering crowds, and the creative individuals (i.e. performers and artists). The PV events should thus be considered as co-created innovative products that depart from mega-event stadiums and flourish far beyond the original scope of the event.

### 4.4.3. Space C: Virtual parallel space

Whereas mega-events attract great numbers of domestic and international visitors, only a small portion of spectators are fortunate enough to watch the games by being physically

present; many more watch via media channels (Traganou & Kang, 2008). Historically, the employment of live television broadcasting in the Olympics heralded the era of media coverage in mega sporting events and significantly enhanced the feeling of being in a "global village" (Mulcahy, 2016, p. 72). In the last decade, the rising of social media has created a new public space that is virtual on the Internet and temporally parallel to the physical world we live in (Hutchins & Sanderson, 2017; Traganou & Kang, 2008). Traditional media channels such as television broadcasting, are being contested and forced to seek innovative possibilities. This section argues that the emergence of social media has triggered upheavals in traditional media channels and reshaped views on media broadcasting of mega sporting events. The media platform, where the changes are happening, is termed here as a "virtual parallel space". Compared to Spaces A and B, Space C is very special because encountering the three dimensions of innovation (**what**, *who*, and *how*) is more amorphous and thus difficult to analyse in isolation. Therefore, the following section analyses the three dimensions together.

### 4.4.3.1. *WHAT & WHO & HOW*

First and foremost, the reason to include both the recently popularised social media channels, as well as the traditional live television broadcasting channels in the analysis, is that they are both innovative creatures of their time. Some 15 years ago, Roche (2006) observed that "the Internet at its current stage of development and usage is not capable of creating a 'global village' – type of impact in relation to mega sport events comparable with live global television" (p. 35), because the Internet was only diffuse in the global north, but not yet widely in the south. Hence, television broadcasting used to be the channel through which people-built connections and gained collective experiences of watching mega sporting events before the Internet became accessible globally.

In recent decades, the development of media technologies (e.g. new devices) has made numerous innovative ideas realisable, and incremental improvements have constantly been made (Liang, 2013). For example, in terms of television broadcasting, the standard definition mode has been replaced by a higher definition mode; digitalisation has made it

possible for people to access the same files from different channels at the same time; "network production" improves efficiency so much that production and broadcasting processes become seamless (Liang, 2013, p. 479).

The most recent innovation in television broadcasting emerged during the 2019 Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) World Cup. For the first time in history, the image analysis technology of "3D (i.e. three dimensional) Tracking" was integrated into live television broadcast (Panasonic Newsroom Global, 2019). It displayed the trajectory of the ball, using different colours to represent different processes: yellow for serve, pink for serve receive, green for setter, and blue for hit (Figure 17). On the bottom left corner, "spike height," "Toss>>>Spike" (total seconds from when the setter touched the ball to the spike), and "receive angle" data were displayed during the replay of the previous score. The innovation not only treated fans to a more professional perspective of watching baseball games, but also made the live broadcasting more interesting to general viewers.

**Figure 17**

*2019 FIVB Volleyball Women's World Cup*

This content has been removed by the author due to copyright issues

From "*The 2019 Women's Volleyball World Cup broadcasts new technology and the Chinese women's volleyball team deduction is only 1 second*", 2019, *Sina Sports.*

Compared to these incremental changes, the emergence of the Internet and social media applications such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have brought radical changes to mega sporting events reporting (Yoon & Pedersen, 2018). Scholars such as Traganou and Kang (2008) have thus indicated that traditional television broadcasts are segmentations instead of integrations of all the media channels. Empirical evidence was collected during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, where people were overwhelmed by multiple screens showing television, digital streams, and social networking applications (Hutchins & Sanderson, 2017). In terms of the media offerings, routinised live broadcasting on television played the centralised role, while social networking services integrated into the changing media platform, provided news coverage and related updates of the events (Hutchins & Sanderson, 2017).

The virtual space reflects and reinforces three marvellous progresses. First and foremost, more voices can be heard via social media, as the new era audiences (e.g. the millennial generation) are no longer passive recipients, and are becoming accustomed to participating in the production and distribution of media events (Traganou & Kang, 2008). Such empowerment is likely to diminish individuals' discrimination when expressing themselves in public. Secondly, stronger and closer relationships can be built between elite players, sports teams, leagues, and their fans, since most have official Twitter accounts for making announcements and sharing "behind the scenes" stories to inspire their fans (Yoon & Pedersen, 2008). Lastly, the most critical insight is the reflections of social realities viewed from the parallel space. Compared to television broadcasts that are sequential and organised, posts on social networking applications are more segmented and dependent on individual users' perspectives (Hutchins & Sanderson, 2017). Therefore, otherwise hidden or unnoticed details can be discovered and transferred on social media quickly. In a mega-event context, random visitors become immersed in the everyday life of the host place, which means they can provide vivid experiences of hospitality, food and beverage, cultural activities, and other community-based activities (Hutchins & Sanderson, 2017) through their social media applications. Conversely, they are also likely

to witness and share the dark side of a host place. In general, information posted on a virtual space challenges the "truth games" (of social reality) McKinlay & Starkey, 1998, as cited in Frew & McGillivray, 2008, p. 194) in its parallel physical space.

## 4.5. Summary

This chapter has provided a systematic analysis of innovations in the context of sporting events, particularly mega-events, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cups. It started by outlining the various typologies of sporting events, categorised according to the size and scale of their impacts. As the prioritisation of each typology is different, they tend to show and emphasise different outcomes. For example, mega-events are expected to enhance a hosting country's global image, hallmark events are held to improve the sense of belonging in local places, and local/community events cater more to the development of residential areas.

Yoshida et al.'s (2013) analytical framework was analysed in order to evaluate design innovations by considering their four dimensions: settings (*where*), offerings (*what*), processes (*how*), and relationships (*who*). By examining these key dimensions, a comprehensive background analysis of the sports industry, as well as sporting events design, was provided. It is important that sporting events designers are fully aware of these knowledges, as they can enhance their cognition of design, and are thus likely to provide inspiration for innovation.

The third part concentrated on the space imagination; three practical approaches were analysed with reviews of empirical evidence. The first approach enhances sporting events' liminal zones. Mega-event organisers usually use the liminal zone as a showcase of symbolic values, innovating the offerings, services, and engagement with spectators. The second approach moves beyond the sports events space. In this, PV events were analysed as good examples of event experience co-creation, as well as boosting incentives to related industries. The third approach creates a virtual parallel space with changing media platforms, where more voices are being heard and more perspectives of watching mega-events are exchanged and communicated. All three approaches concern the creative

design of space - physically, virtually, or in combination.

# 5. Discussion

## 5.1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, event scholars have used different approaches to examine the essence of event design and developed many conceptual models. The literature review chapter reviewed and analysed the models and theories that explain event design in general terms. Following that, innovative approaches were examined in more depth within the sporting events context. This chapter critically discusses innovations in sporting events by comparing them with existing models. Based on this evaluation, a holistic conceptual model is developed to illustrate the logic, mindset, and practical insights that inform sporting events innovation. In addition, the issues of mega-event legacy and the essential understandings of sporting events fans are analysed, as these are the key indicators for future innovation, especially for mega-events. From these discussions, a comprehensive picture of sports events is developed, highlighting the issues around innovation in sporting events design.

## 5.2. Key approaches to innovation in sporting events

Innovative approaches in mega sporting events are closely related to space settings and thus require designers and organisers to have outstanding skills of space imagination. In practice, three space settings have been found to be the centres of actualising innovative ideas: Space A liminal zones (sports stadiums), Space B public viewing (PV) spaces, and Space C, virtual spaces created by media platforms (see Chapter 4). In answering the first research question, "what are the key factors and processes of innovations in sporting events design?" it is useful to examine innovative practices within sporting events contexts using the existing theoretical frameworks of event design discussed in the literature review (Chapter 3).

Table 3 offers five key approaches/dimensions extracted from the literature review: (1) the space-time framework (based on Getz and Page's [2020] model of the planned event experience), (2) event stimuli (within physical, social, and personal contexts) (Kuiper & Smit, 2011), (3) individual perception and evaluation (Morgan, 2008; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014), (4) experience realms (active vs passive, immerse vs absorb) (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), and (5) co-creation (i.e. of experiences and products) (based on Getz and Page's

(2020) theory of the experience continuum). Specific sections in the findings and analysis (Chapter 4) relate to specific categories in the table.

**Table 3**

*Key Findings*

| No. | Event design approaches | Categories | Space A Liminal/liminoid (stadiums) | Space B Public viewing (PV) events | Space C Virtual space (media platforms) | Event product/ Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Space-time framework | Challenges spatial constraints | Yes | Yes | Yes (redefines "space") | |
| | | Challenges temporal constraints | No | No | Yes (before and afterwards) | |
| 2 | Event stimuli | Physical context | • Stadium design and construction • Urban regeneration | • Public area rearranged • Supportive facilities | No | Event product (Producer perspective) |
| | | Social context | • Symbolic values • Images of the hosting city/country | • Gathers like-minded people • Boosts the associated industries (food & beverage, performance…) | • Not limited to any particular social context | |
| 3 | Individual perception and evaluation | Personal context & individual perception and evaluation | • Design personality • Culture • Symbolic meanings | • Relationships (social interactions) • Personal benefits (engagement, socialising, self-development) | • Relationships (virtually) • Personal benefits • Symbolic meanings | Event experience (Consumer perspective) |
| 4 | Experience realms | Active/passive | Active or passive | Active | Active | |
| | | Immerses/absorbs | Immerses | Immerses | Immerses | |
| | | Category | Aesthetic or escapist | Escapist | Escapist | |
| 5 | Co-creation | Product | Stadium décor design | Varies | N/A | Co-creation (both perspectives) |
| | | Experience | Screaming and cheering | Socialising and communicating | Experience liberating | |

First and foremost, the space-time framework is at the centre of many theoretical frameworks of event design (e.g. Getz & Page's (2020) model of the planned event experience), and indicates the spatial and temporal constraints of events. Nevertheless, research findings show that many innovations in sporting events stem from the challenges

of these physical constraints. In the spatial sense, Space A (liminal zone) innovates within the original liminal zones, that is, the mega-events stadiums. Space B (PV events) steps outside such boundaries and looks for alternative public spaces to host spectator events, and Space C (virtual media platforms) fundamentally challenges spatial boundaries by creating a completely independent parallel space, where virtual activities and events may happen before, during, and after mega-events.

Secondly, to evaluate innovations in sporting events, Kuiper and Smit's (2011) model of the multiple layers and aspects of event stimuli provides suitable theoretical underpinnings (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4.). The design and construction of mega-events stadiums, as well as the organising of public spaces for PV events, reflect the combinations of physical and social contexts. In Space A, stadiums are commonly seen as reflective of the image of the hosting city or country, hence, the physical appearance reveals and reflects the symbolic meanings embedded within the sociocultural context. In Space B, the physical settings are more flexible so fans can completely immerse themselves in a relaxing environment. Spontaneous encounters are encouraged to occur so that individuals' social needs can be fulfilled. Space C is different from the other two spaces because it does not have a physical setting; therefore, the social context associated with Space C is more complex and amorphous.

Thirdly, theories that concern individuals' perceptions and evaluations of an event experience are useful for enriching understandings of innovations in sporting events design. These theories are merged with the "personal context" within the event stimuli model in Table 3. because they both discuss the subjectivity of forming event experiences. Morgan's (2008) model of the prism of event experience, which described the externalisation and internalisation processes in forming event experiences, helps when comparing the three types of space design (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.5). Space A highlights the internal factors, such as design personality (programme and overall image), culture (traditions and meanings of the mega-events), and symbolic meanings (identification with the meanings and values of an event). Space B is more related to external factors, such as relationships (social interaction) and personal benefits (enjoyment, socialising, and self-development). Space C involves both internal and external factors - relationships, personal benefits, and symbolic meanings - and is different from the other two spaces, because all these processes happen in a virtual space.

Fourthly, Pine and Gilmore's (2011) theory of the four types of experience realms, explains the differences amongst sporting events experiences (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1.). When viewing sports events, spectators physically and mentally go into the events, and therefore, in Pine and Gilmore' terms, they immerse themselves within the event settings. The dimension of active/passive participation varies slightly within the three types of spaces. In Space A, participants are situated closest to the sporting events, which means they can either cheer during thrill performances, or just enjoy the skill of the performances; therefore, their participation combines activity and passivity, and the experiences they gain may be aesthetic or escapist, or both. In Spaces B and C, participants actively engage with others and make differences to the event outcome, hence, they build escapist experiences.

Lastly, from evaluating innovations within the contexts of sporting events, it becomes evident that the theories of experience co-creation and liberating could be usefully supported with more empirical evidence (Getz and Page developed the central concepts but without practical guidance). It is now common to see the active participation of sporting events fans reflected in the physical design of stadium decorations. Moreover, enhancements to a stadium atmosphere cannot be realised without the efforts of fans. Fan behaviours have a remarkable effect on the performances of players. The co-creation of experiences in the three types of spaces is therefore imbued with the diffusing emotions – also referred to as "atmosphere building" based on the common ground between people and their mutual self-other awareness (Trigg, 2020). The sense of togetherness is the psychological foundation of experience co-creation.

Generally speaking, Space A is identified more with the idea of "visualising" the intangible aspects within event design theories, and therefore, the approach adopted in practice tends to be similar to the designing of event products with embodied values and spirits. In contrast, Spaces B and C are more likely to concern the social and psychological needs of event participants, and therefore, event experiences are prioritised in the design.

## 5.3. Building a conceptual model and implications

To provide a holistic and comprehensive analysis of innovations in sporting events, it is important to acknowledge the variations influencing design beliefs. For example, consideration needs to be given to whether the designing is about event experiences or

event products, whether it prioritises consumers' or producers' perspectives, whether it is incremental or radical at the core, and whether it aims satisfying the needs of sporting events elements or general events elements (i.e. those that can be found in other event typologies). Hence, Figure 18 presents a holistic examination of this complexity, and is the key to answering the second research question, "how can a theoretical framework enrich the understandings of innovations within the context of sporting events?"

**Figure 18**

*Conceptual Model of Innovations in Sporting Events Design*
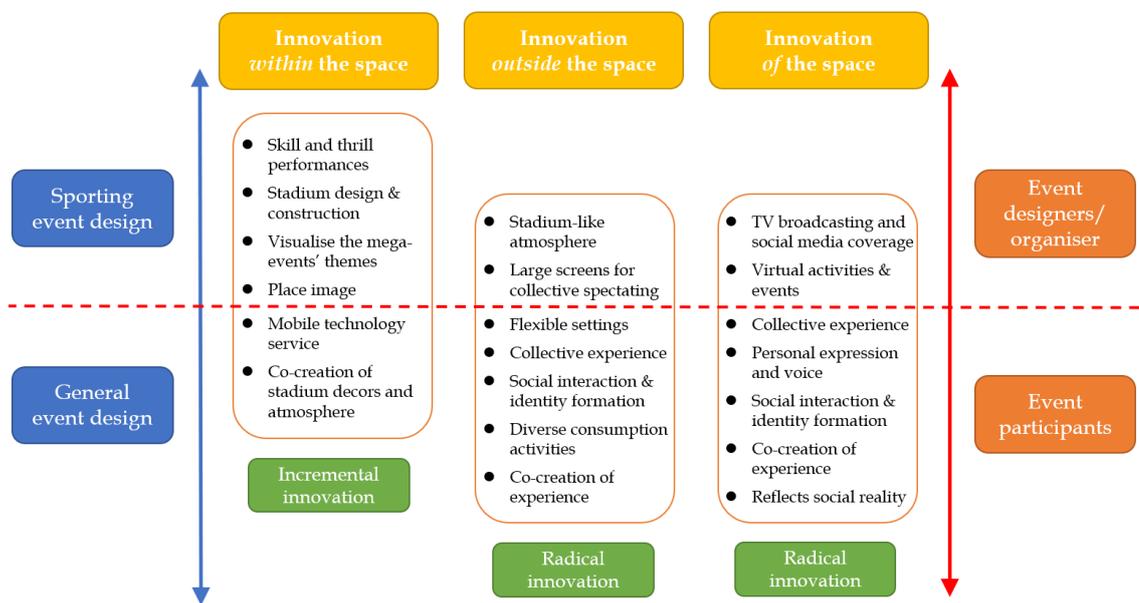


The yellow boxes on the top represent three types of space imaginations: innovation *within* the space (liminal zone), innovation *outside* the space (PV events), and innovation *of* the space (virtual media platforms). The blue arrow on the left side illustrates the trend of innovations, from those closely related to the sporting events' components (e.g., competitions, sports stadiums, and symbolic meanings) to the general events' elements, which are not unique within a sporting context (e.g., social interactions, entertainment, and collective experiences). The double arrow on the right side indicates the stakeholders who design the innovations and let them happen, from purely dependent on producers and designers (top) to those dependent on the event participants (bottom). The three boxes in the middle list the practical approaches of innovations, which fall into different

categories according to their proximity to the core of the sports elements and the most influential stakeholders. Finally, the green boxes on the bottom identify whether the innovations are incremental or radical in nature.

The conceptual model combines different approaches to evaluating innovations in sporting events design, and indicates various possibilities for future innovations. In designing the three types of space, not all the innovative products or experiences are limited to sporting events contexts. That is, it is useful for event designers to take a wider view, and situate sporting events amongst all the event typologies to find the common points or joys that events may bring to their audiences, such as the fulfilment of social connections, the forming of identities, and the building of collective memories. Conversely, the success of innovations that are particular to sporting events contexts is also meaningful, because it highlights the importance of using the unique characteristics of a particular event typology to create competitive products and experiences that are rarely found in other event typologies.

The comparison between Space A and Spaces B and C shows another interesting phenomenon: the further away an event is from the initial liminal zone, the more radical the innovations are likely to be (the relative places of the three orange boxes in the middle compared to the blue arrow). That is, event participants gradually replace the dominant roles of the organisers by co-creating their experiences. In Space B, event spectators are provided with flexible settings to build personal connections or participate in different forms of consumption. In Space C, the radical innovations may never be realised without the participation of empowered individuals, who use the virtual platforms to voice their opinions. From an academic perspective, human behaviours within a virtual space can fill the emptiness of Getz and Page's (2020) theory of "experience liberating," that refuses formal planning of any kind.

This conceptual model may provide insights helpful for analysing other event typologies. The key considerations within the framework are: (1) searching for space imagination possibilities (yellow), (2) negotiating the balance of designing with and without using the particular elements attached to the contexts (blue), (3) enabling the co-creation of the key stakeholders (orange), and (4) allowing either incremental or radical innovations to occur at the end with the collective efforts of the various sectors (green). The practices summarised in this model are research findings related to sporting events contexts;

however, if the conceptual model is used to interpret innovations in other event typologies, the practices can be replaced to suit specific circumstances. This model shows how to use an analytical framework to conduct a holistic and systematic study of the designing of a particular event typology.

## 5.4. Evaluating innovations from a legacy perspective

The short duration is one of the many defining characteristics of events, particularly if the time and efforts involved before and afterwards are taken into consideration (Horne, 2011). Therefore, the focus of designing a sporting event, particularly a mega-event, should not be limited to a fixed short period, but instead, the event organisers and designers need to give consideration to the legacy perspective while designing for an event.

Event scholars have produced many studies of mega-events legacies (e.g. Brown & Cresciani, 2017; Byers et al., 2020; Preuss, 2007; Thomson et al., 2013). The success of the Olympic Games is not just judged on the 17 days of sporting competitions, because these do not justify the enormous financial and human investments (Chappelet, 2019). In hosting a mega sporting event, it is expected that the positive legacy will bring substantial benefits for several generations in terms of investment, transport infrastructure, sports facilities, housing, and other business opportunities (Fox, 2013).

Even though the term "legacy" implies post-event results, the planning of a legacy should be one of the earliest considerations in the event's design. Leopkey and Parent (2017) defined four event legacy phases; the earliest, "legacy conceptualisation," was designated as occurring before the formal bidding process, because it sets the vision of the legacy, which helps secure support from stakeholders. Following the conceptualisation process, legacy planning, and implementation, as well as post-games reservations, are distributed to appropriate authorities. Stewart and Rayner (2016) suggested some practical advice, to identify post-game users during the bidding or construction process. The 2002 Commonwealth Games held in Manchester were given as an example because the main stadium was later used as the home stadium of Manchester Football Club for Premier League games. Even though the size of the Commonwealth Games is not compatible with the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup, the post-event plan none-the-less provided a valuable lesson to be learned. In fact, the reuse of mega-events' stadiums and other

facilities can be more difficult than for those designed for smaller-sized sports events, because their over-capacity exceeds the regular needs of the hosting place. Thus, the designing of mega-event stadiums can be creative in terms of adaptability to post-game uses.

Scholars such as Stewart and Rayner (2016) pointed out that the challenges around mega-events legacies arise from bid promises. Their study showed there is a tacit understanding within the Olympic community that bids are extremely inaccurate, and usually based on a mindset of win-at-all-costs that exaggerates the potential positive aspects (p. 163). Moreover, because the bid promises are initiated at such as early stage, translating the promises into actual plans requires substantial revisions. Nevertheless, these revision processes are not conducted or reviewed as thoroughly as were the original plans. Hence, for event organisers and designers, it is important to be mindful and reflect constantly on the long-term perspective, even at the early stage. After all, the impacts of mega-events are enormous; in the spatial sense, they extend far beyond the event spaces, and in the temporal sense, they have the potential to last for many generations. Therefore, to realise any tiny innovative idea requires care and a sense of responsibility.

## 5.5. Understanding sporting events fans

To organise a successful sporting event, the understanding of the fans is a prerequisite. This is particularly important for mega-events, as fans can come from all around the world, and therefore have different expectations and needs. Therefore, scholars such as Bury (2016) suggested that event organisers need to be fully aware of the sub-cultures of event participants, and incorporate diverse event-related activities so that each group's needs are met.

The diverse nature of sporting event fans can be interpreted in different ways. For example, Bodet and Bernache-Assollant (2009) conducted a case study in a French ice hockey context and divided sporting fans according to their team identification, meaning the extent to which the fans feel a psychological connection to their favourite team or player (p. 18). Their findings suggest that different groups have distinctive attributes that affect their event satisfaction, ranging from those primarily based on the quality of the game and the performance of the players (the most common group) to those based around services and socialising opportunities (the least common group). Therefore, in designing

sporting events, it is crucial that the needs of different types of spectators are all taken into consideration. Designing a memorable sporting event thus requires a sophisticated balancing between improving the quality of the game, and adding personalised services.

Besides sport team identification, Woratschek et al. (2017) found that the different patterns of fans' behaviours in PV events can be explained by geographical and gender differences. Foreigners consider team identification, live entertainment, and escape as most important, whereas locals are more interested in moving around to socialise with the foreigners and those from other cultural backgrounds. In addition, males are more identified with their team, whereas female spectators place more focus on the social aspects of an event instead of the game itself. Hence, to fulfil the diverse needs of event participants, the different characteristics embedded in demographics (i.e. gender, nationality) may be useful considerations.

Generally speaking, to ensure the success of events, producers need to understand their customers' preferences and predict the market trend. As Smith et al. (2017) indicated, event satisfaction involves a rational judgement of "the level of consumption-related fulfilment" (p. 86). So far, few studies have been undertaken to analyse sporting events fans, their intentions, behaviours, satisfaction attributes, and so forth; however, there is also little empirical evidence to support the practical use of such research findings, particularly during the pre-event designing processes. If event organisers could have a better understanding of fans, they would be able to design more personalised event experiences, for example, by introducing more social activities in PV events to impress female spectators who so not strongly identify with sporting events per se, or print brochures with detailed analyses of the players' competitive skills so that fans who identify strongly with the game, have something new to discover, or include more singing sessions and amplify the noises of the infield sounds, such as the sound of kicking a football, so the atmosphere is enhanced and felt by all the spectators, no matter how far away their seats are from the action.

It is important to please event participants and fulfil their needs, meanwhile, a dialectic understanding of their roles as influencers of experience design is essential. Hölzen and Meier (2019) conducted a study of followers of FIFA official Twitter accounts, examining their attitudes to a recent corruption scandal. It was assumed that the crisis of FIFA legitimacy arising from the scandal would result in a trend of unfollowing the Twitter

accounts, nevertheless, the research results showed there were no clear responses from social media users in this regard. Hölzen and Meier (2019) therefore argued that event organisers should be sceptical of fans' attitudes, and in particular, that fans' expectations should not interfere with the principles of sporting events governance.

It can be inferred that what fans care about is of primary relevance to the offerings of sporting events, either physically or mentally. However, they may not be particularly sensitive to the governance of sporting events, which may explain the lack of reaction to FIFA's corruption scandal. A fundamental difference between an event organiser and an event participant is that the former looks at long-term development and tries to ensure the event is running in a healthy way, whereas the latter cares more about the enjoyment of the moment, without concern for the future. To summarise, understanding sporting events fans means that event organisers are fully aware of the limitation of the fans' perspectives, and try to avoid having the same lack of concern for the future.

## 5.6. Summary

This chapter integrated existing models and theories of event design with the findings on innovations in the sporting events contexts. The first section answered the first research question, "what are the key factors and processes of innovations in sporting events design?" Five major theories of event design were found to be adaptable to and useful for sporting events contexts. Empirical evidence of the practices was critically analysed. The second section answered the second research question, "how can a theoretical framework enrich the understandings of innovations within the context of sporting events?" A four-dimensional conceptual model was developed to describe various ways of visualising space imaginations. Although the model was created against a background of sporting events, it may also be used to examine innovations in other event typologies. After answering the research questions, two additional issues related to mega sporting events design were critically analysed: the planning of legacy, and the understanding of fans. It was concluded that innovations in designing sporting events should consider long-term impacts, both domestically and globally.

# 6. Conclusion

## 6.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes this conceptual research. Firstly, the four research objectives are re-examined. Then, the theoretical implications and practical implications are discussed separately. Following this, the limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future researches are outlined, and at the end, some final thoughts are shared.

## 6.2. Research objectives re-examined

The aim of this research was to provide a critical and theoretical examination of innovations in event design, in particular, focussing on innovations in sporting events contexts. This research contributes to knowledge of the important factors essential to innovations in sporting events by developing a novel conceptual framework, the use of which enables a critical examination of the complexity of innovations in sporting events. The four research objectives outlined in the first chapter have been achieved, and are summarised and discussed next.

✓ Objective 1 – Provide a comprehensive literature review of the existing models and theories of event design, and critically evaluate their advantages and limitations in explaining the means and ends of innovations.

The literature review (Chapter 3) provided a systematic review of the theories and models that explained the key characteristics and factors of event design. The chapter was divided into two sections, according to the different perspectives the analysis adopted. The first section concentrated on event experience design, so the perspective of consumers/event participants was prioritised. The second section analysed theories that interpreted event design from producers' and designers' perspectives, and considered event design as producing event products.

By comparing and contrasting the two kinds of mindsets in designing events, different approaches to innovation were discovered. In designing event experiences, it is firstly

important to acknowledge that we live in the era of the experience economy, so experience has become one of the most competitive offerings. In event studies, experience co-creation has thus been argued by academics as the critical goal of the future, whereas in practice, the spatial-temporal framework has always been at the centre of attention. Additionally, event stimuli may also arise within a particular social, physical, and personal context. Overall, it is individual people who experience communications with the rest of the world, which means event experiences are experienced as highly individualised, and therefore, subjective. Hence, individual perceptions and evaluations of event experiences have been suggested by some scholars as the central factors of event design and overall satisfaction.

In terms of event product design, the perspective adopted has changed from event consumers to that of event suppliers, that is, the designers and organisers. Accompanied by the rising popularity of the experience economy, the term "product" has been enriched with many additional meanings and values. For example, over recent decades, the term "event product" has changed from referring to just tangible goods, to embodying symbolic meanings and creative ideas. Therefore, the creation of event products has been interpreted in this research as an innovative package that incorporates both tangible and intangible elements. This section also identified different forms of relationships between event innovations and the event market. Innovative ideas were found to be the keys to sustainable competitiveness in the market. The issue of generating innovative event products was also carefully examined as those who generate them provide creative ideas, and ensure the long-term development of event businesses.

✓ Objective 2 – Gain a better understanding of the major factors and processes that determine innovation in the designing of sporting events.

The research findings and analysis were centred around three types of space settings attached to mega sporting events (the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cups) (Chapter 4). The first is the liminal zone, which commonly refers to the main stadiums of mega-events; the second is the public viewing space, which is used to host public viewing events

during FIFA World Cups, and the third is the virtual space provided on media platforms, but including traditional television broadcasting as well as newly emerged social media.

The innovative approaches within the three space settings were further examined by comparing them to the conceptual models and theories of event design. Five dimensions of the theories were found useful in theorising innovative practices within the contexts of sporting events: (1) space-time framework, (2) event stimuli, (3) individual perception and evaluation, (4) experience realms, and (5) co-creation (Chapter 5). Evaluating from the above dimensions, the innovation approaches within the three space settings were systematically examined, which surrendered similarities and variations. For instance, stadiums were considered to be the most symbolised, and therefore, the designing processes for these were more concerned with visually manifesting symbolic values and spirits. In contrast, public viewing spaces and virtual social media spaces were created to fulfil the social requirements of individuals.

✓ Objective 3 – Develop a holistic conceptual model by accommodating a multi-dimensional designing process of sporting events through which the innovative practices can be examined in more depth.

Based on the analysis of the literature and the research findings, a conceptual model of innovations in sporting events design was developed (Chapter 5). The goal of building such a model was to synthesise the most important factors in designing sporting events. In addition, it was designed to clarify the complex relationships amongst the key factors. The model provides insights into the analysis of innovations, as it contains multiple approaches for in-depth investigations into designing considerations, such as the prioritisation of sports elements vs. general events elements, tangible products vs. intangible meanings (or combined), and producer-dominant vs. consumer-dominant designing approaches (or co-creation). This is important because the coupling of the particular choices determines the overall design mindsets and the potential directions of innovations. Based on the systematic examination of the innovative practices in the three space settings, this research argues that innovations within stadiums are incremental at

the core, whereas innovations designed for public viewing events and shown on media channels are relatively more radical.

✓ Objective 4 – Produce a conceptual model that could be applied across the wide spectrum of event typologies.

The fourth objective sought to enlarge the theoretical and practical implications of the conceptual model built in this research. Even though the model discussed under Objective 3 is specific to sporting events contexts, the ultimate goal of producing the model was to make it applicable in explaining innovations across the wide spectrum of event typologies. For example, the conceptual model focuses on the importance of space imagination, which can be used in designing innovative music festivals, which are held in different space settings (i.e. indoor, outdoor, on social media, etc). Moreover, in a similar way to the hosting of public viewing events during FIFA World Cups, music festival designers may choose to incorporate more social aspects to impress their audiences. In addition, the use of social media is not limited to sporting events, but instead, music festivals, artistic events, conferences, and other event typologies' organisers may find it useful in broadcasting and sustaining close relations with their followers. To summarise, the multi-dimensional model implies a method of interpreting the complexity of actualising innovations in event design and serves as a solution to combine as many dimensions of thinking as possible.

## 6.3. Implications

### 6.3.1. Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of this research have three aspects. First, through the literature review, a unique way of categorising mainstream literature on event design was discovered, based on the perspective adopted. This is very important, because as discussed throughout this research, the supply side and demand side are closely related, and both sides are needed in drawing a complete and holistic picture of event design. Second, the theories and conceptual models of event design were tested within the

contexts of mega sporting events. Some of the key research findings further addressed the absence of practical guidance in the existing theories (e.g. the co-creation of event experiences on social media, is an example of Getz and Page's experience liberating theory). Third, innovative practices in sporting events design were systematically examined. The conceptual model built on the basis of the research findings is highly abstracted and based on random phenomena. Therefore, the scope of the conceptual model is broad, but strongly underpinned by in-depth and conceptual thinking.

### 6.3.2. Practical implications

The research findings provide the practical implications of designing innovative events. In designing sporting events, designers need to find their inner talents of space imagination, challenging spatial constraints and creating innovative products. For example, designing mega-events stadiums can incorporate symbolic meanings so they become the icons of the hosting cities Hosting public viewing events shows another direction for innovations. The peripheral products of mega-events can also be remarkable selling points. Sporting events attendees may not necessarily be particularly interested in the competition, but instead, more interested in meeting new people and enjoying the building of collective memories. Therefore, practitioners can be open-minded about ways to fulfil the diverse needs of event participants. Lastly, the development of the Internet and social media channels indicates the future of experience co-creation. The combination of hosting mega-events and virtual activities is the key to sustaining an interactive relationship between event organisers and their fan communities.

### 6.4. Limitations of the study

This research was limited in the data collection process, since the vast majority of data were collected from the research findings of previous studies. Although the inner values and relevance of the studies to this research were carefully examined, the potential limitations of previous research findings directly cause the limitations of this study. It is also worth noting that within different contexts, the challenges of innovations in event design may be different, hence, the findings are only indicative on a general basis.

## 6.5. Recommendations for future research

This research provides insights into the systematic analysis of innovations in sporting events by focusing mainly on mega-events, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cups. The gap-filling theories were developed within one sub-field of the many event typologies. The innovations in sporting events design were found to be closely related to the sophisticated designs of the space settings. Furthermore, this research argues that to design innovative sporting events, multiple important dimensions need to be considered in combination.

Future research may continue to evaluate innovative approaches to other types of events, such as music festivals, artistic events, and business conventions, to name a few. In addition, as this research concentrated mainly on innovations in mega-events, future researchers might explore innovations in hallmark events, regional events, or local and community events. These offer different potentials for innovation.

## 6.6. Final thoughts

Events are very important in contemporary society, because they have the capacity to influence almost every aspect of our lives. This research touched on many aspects of the significance. As individuals, what we hear and watch on media impacts the way we think and how we interpret the world, either in close proximity to us or far away on the other side of the world. For hosting cities or countries, events are incredibly significant. From an economic perspective, the short-term and long-term impacts may radically reshape a country's economy. From a political perspective, by hosting mega-events or regional events, the hosting place is highly likely to gain enormous global attention, and from a sociocultural perspective, mega-events are capable of gathering a great number of people around the world, hence, more interactions and relationships are likely to be built. It was therefore particularly exciting to research innovations in sporting events design.

This research aimed at looking at the big picture of event design and finding the uniqueness in designing sporting events. To ensure the sustainable development of the

event industry, it is very important that the key stakeholders (i.e. designers, organisers, and leaders of the fan communities) constantly strive for innovation in designing. Therefore, this research is significant in both theoretical and practical terms.

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