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## INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO EVENT TOURISM

### Abstract

This article explores the growing importance of sustainable practices within the event tourism industry. It highlights the potential benefits of eco-conscious event planning for both the environment and the overall event experience. Examples of successful event tourism initiatives that have embraced sustainability principles are analyzed. By examining these topics, the article aims to raise awareness about the importance of integrating sustainability into event tourism and provide practical guidance for event planners seeking to minimize their environmental footprint.

**Key words:** *event tourism, sustainability, impacts, triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental, culture, tourist-oriented performances)*

### 1.Introduction

Event tourism, also known as event-based tourism or event-oriented tourism, refers to the phenomenon where people travel to attend events or festivals held in different locations. These events can range from cultural and sporting events to business conferences and trade shows. Event tourism is a significant sector of the tourism industry, as it attracts visitors from both near and far who are interested in experiencing a specific event or festival. Event tourism covers attendance at traditional or contemporary celebrations of culture, which can include music, dancing, gastronomy, arts and sports. It is both a field of study and a globally significant sector of the economy. It can be defined and studied by reference to its supply side. Event tourism at a destination level is the development and marketing of planned events as tourist attractions, catalysts, animators, image makers, and place marketers. This process includes bidding on, facilitating and creating events, and the management of portfolios of events as destination assets. For individual events, event tourism means taking a marketing orientation to attract tourists, sometimes as an additional segment and sometimes as the core business.

Event tourism refers to the propensity of travel to attend events, both on the part of dedicated event tourists who are motivated to travel for specific events and other tourists who attend events while away from home.

The usage of the term “event tourism” was rarely till broadcasted report of The New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Department in 1987. In this report, event tourism mentioned as a vital and fast-growing sub-segment of global tourism. Getz published an article in 1989 in Tourism Management. In his article Getz, purposed a framework for understanding nature of event tourism [1]. Thus, it can be said that the relationship between events and tourism is not new. The phenomenon of event tourism has proliferated since the late 1980s [2].

All human activities have some impacts in different contents. Events as organized human activities also have some impacts. Impact studies in tourism literature show that impacts of any tourism activity could be examined under three headings (social, environmental and economic) both in negative and positive manners [3]. Thus, it is possible to analyze impacts of events or event tourism in these three headings. All events will have some form of environmental impact, which inevitably increase relative to the size of the event. Common negative environmental impacts of events include pollution from vehicle emissions, noise, chemical, sewerage, ammonia, litter in the area around and on the event site. As with any form of tourism, cultural tourism has a range of impacts on natural and built environments. As tourism in a region grows, pressure on natural resources increases, potentially creating serious problems [4]. Each destination has limits of

activities that cannot be surpassed without causing damage to the environment, and therefore limits to the carrying capacity of the environment need to be detected and addressed. Possible harmful effects include water and air pollution, the destruction of ecosystems, inappropriate visual and structural changes and the depletion of the region's important natural resources [5].

However, professed to have positive impacts, cultural tourism is believed to establish and reinforce identity, preserve cultural and historical heritage and facilitate harmony and understanding among people, ultimately encouraging a less damaging and more sustainable form of tourism.

Sustainable tourism is defined by the [UN Environment Program](#) and [UN World Tourism Organization](#) as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

Additionally, they say that sustainable tourism "refers to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability" [6].

There are two main aspects to considering sustainable events. Initially, there is the sustainability of the event itself – financial and economic sustainability and longevity, social sustainability in terms of acceptance and ownership by the local community, and the environmental sustainability measures undertaken by the event organizers. This is often referred to as the triple (or even quadruple) bottom line [7].

In this research we are going to offer some strategies for integrating sustainable practices into event experiences. First, partnerships, with a specific focus on local involvement and ownership should be put forward to achieve sustainable event tourism. This should be followed by an examination of the importance of education and training and interpretation and representation of cultural resources.

## II. Methodology

During the research, scientific studies on international and national experiences of the development of event tourism were studied. Scientific-theoretical, observation and selection, empirical observation methods and case study methods were used in the process of creating the article. The reliability of the research results is based on the foreign statistical official sources of UNWTO and agenda.brussels.

## III. Literature review

There have been numerous studies that have examined the role of cultural tourism on the development of both the economy and environment. Yuham Qiao (2020) studied the integrated development of culture and tourism industries. This paper, based on the analysis of the current situation of culture and tourism industries, discusses the issues and defects in the process and puts forward the innovative methods and development mode for industries convergence [8].

Research by Morgan and Pritchard (2007) emphasizes the growing importance of cultural tourism and the role of authenticity in destination branding. Tourist-oriented performances can bridge the gap between static cultural sites and vibrant cultural expressions. Furthermore, the analysis in this article creates a base from which to re-examine touristic representations in the context of further political and cultural change [9].

M. Picard (2016) explores the concept of "performance tourism" and how staged cultural performances can both entertain tourists and educate them about local traditions. The remainder of the studies on the benefits of tourist-oriented performances on the destination image address concepts such as tourist satisfaction, small-scale tourism events, and factors affecting the success of theatrical performances, and as such have been included in the present review of relevant literature [10].

Research focusing specifically on tourist-oriented performances in Bukhara is scarce. However, studies on cultural tourism in Bukhara can provide valuable insights. A.B.Usmonova and M.I. Zokirova (2021) analyze the current state of cultural tourism in Bukhara and identify

areas for improvement. Their work can be a starting point to understand tourist demographics and existing cultural tourism offerings [11].

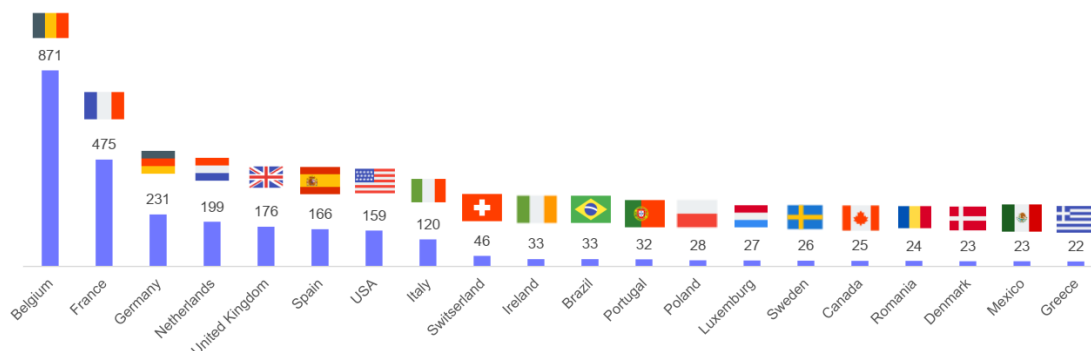
M.Karimov and S.M.Kim (2022) analyze global strategies made to enhance cultural tourism of Uzbekistan with various experiences and policies by focusing on heritage site, diverse folk customs, revolutionary relics and long-lasting leisure and architectural traditions and create a favorable tourism atmosphere by exploring more participatory projects like cultural festivals and designing culture-themed tourism lines [12].

As the appetite for leisure travel and events continues to grow at an exponential rate, the impact on the environment and local communities is becoming an increasing concern, not least by the users of the services. Green approaches to tourism and events are growing in popularity and present an opportunity to both identify solutions to significant environmental and societal problems and new approaches to business. A book *Green Events and Green Tourism* edited by [H.Seraphin](#), [E.Nolan](#) (2019) clearly outlines the key component of today's demand from tourism-sustainability. Tourist-oriented performances being main part of cultural tourism can improve the image of the society by means of protecting natural, cultural and historical tourist resources, at the same time creating destination image [13].

#### IV. Results

As we have reviewed the literature, cultural events, especially tourist-oriented performances play key role in developing tourism and consequently boosting economy of the country. This is obvious in most developed countries with high level of tourist influx. If we learn the case of Belgium which ranked first among 20 countries by number of tourist arrivals in 2022 (871,000 visitors around the year), the country successfully developed event tourism in capital city Brussels (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Tourist arrivals in Belgium in 2022 (in thousands)**



Source: <https://www.visit.brussels/content/dam/visitbrussels/pdf-brochures/presse/studies/rapports-annuels/>

Data from Statbel reveals a significant 43 million overnight stays in 2022 across various tourist accommodations, such as hotels, youth hostels, and holiday centres, compared to the 42.5 million nights in 2019. In addition, more than 8.6 million overnight stays were booked via online platforms such as Airbnb, Booking.com, and Expedia, compared to 1.6 million in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

Data from Airbnb shows that the most popular Belgian cities in the first quarter of 2023 were Flemish coastal cities and locations close to the country's largest music festivals.<sup>2</sup>

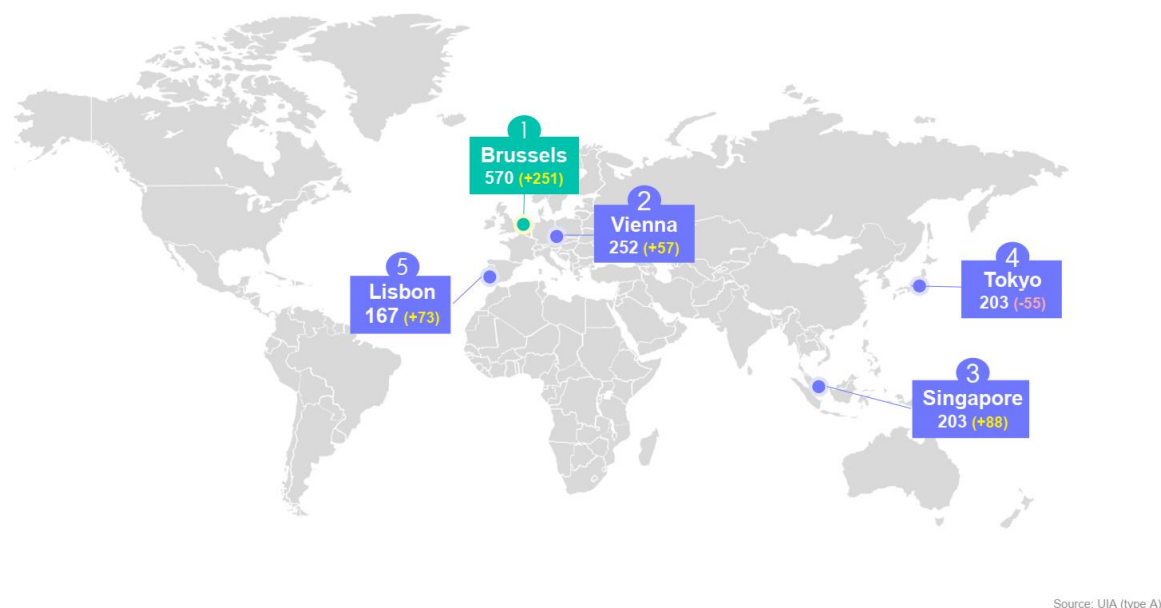
Brussels retained its first place in the world of rankings of the UIA, the Union of International Associations by number of congresses, which are an integral part of event tourism.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brusselstimes.com/594885/belgiums-tourism-hits-record-high-with-51-million-overnight-stays>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.brusselstimes.com/594885/belgiums-tourism-hits-record-high-with-51-million-overnight-stays>

According to UIA, international associations meetings in the city have doubled compared to previous year (Figure 2).

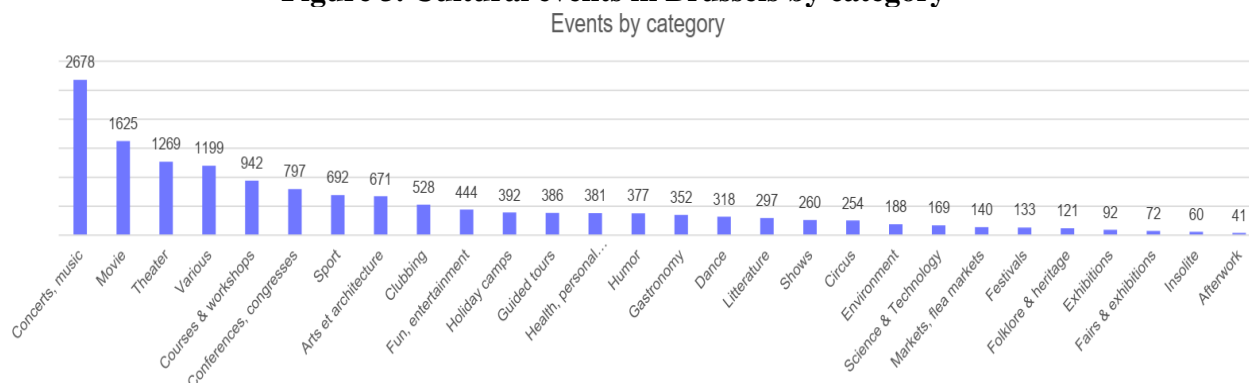
**Figure 2. The number of International Associations meetings, variation vs 2021**



Source: <https://www.visit.brussels/content/dam/visitbrussels/pdf-brochures/presse/studies/rapports-annuels/>

The figure reveals the country's number of meetings held in 2022. Again, Brussels is leading on the top 5 list. Also, data from agenda.brussels shows a recovery in the cultural sector, with 14,971 events registered on the platform (18% down on 2019). According to the data offered by the platform, cultural events in Brussels play a major role for tourism.

**Figure 3. Cultural events in Brussels by category**



Source: <https://www.visit.brussels/content/dam/visitbrussels/pdf-brochures/presse/studies/rapports-annuels/>

In 2020, most of the cultural events reported in the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium) were concerts or musical events (Figure 3). Approximately 2,070 events in this category took place in the Belgian capital or surrounding areas. Meanwhile, just over 1,000 cultural events were theater performances in the region over the same year. 14,971 events hosted on agenda.brussels in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.visit.brussels/content/dam/visitbrussels/pdf-brochures>

In the meantime, nearly 3,000 events are organized in the city every year, and millions of tourists come to visit Brussels. However, this cultural and economic wealth is not without consequences for the climate. After mobilizing the entire population of Brussels around the objectives of its Climate Plan, in 2023 the City of Brussels launched an awareness-raising campaign aimed at socio-economic players. Whether they are companies, shops, non-profit organizations, schools, care centers or government departments, all these organizations have an essential role to play and have every interest in preparing themselves by taking action in favor of the climate. With the Climate Plan, the City wants to help the sector adopt an eco-responsible approach. According to it, the targets for 2030 are as follows:

- Double the number of tourist accommodations with the 'green key' label
- 100% of the events organized by the city comply with the sustainability action plan of Brussels Major Events
- 100% of the cultural venues of the city have implemented a climate action plan<sup>1</sup>

When organizing an International Conference on “Organic Waste in Urban Environments” in Brussels in 2008, Brussels Environment (IBGE-BIM) estimated the CO<sub>2</sub> impact of the event to manage the event in the most climate friendly way. The following emission sources were considered:

- energy in house (energy linked to burning of fossil fuel)
- non-energy in house (cooling & refrigerating gas)
- freight
- supplies
- transport of persons
- direct waste
- fixed assets (buildings, IT hardware etc.)

The carbon footprint inventory helped to design the event according to a set of priorities (e.g. reduce transport, change behaviors, offset remaining emissions). For 114 participants, the estimated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per participant were 0,5 Ton CO<sub>2</sub> (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by type of sources**

CO <sub>2</sub> source	Ton CO <sub>2</sub>	% of total
Paper	0,3	0,5%
Buildings	0,4	0,6%
Food	1,2	2,1%
Hotels	1,8	3,1%
Organisation	3,7	6,5%
Transport	49,6	87,1%
<b>Total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</b>	<b>56,9</b>	

Source: Barbara Dewulf - Brussels Environment (IBGE-BIM), Steven Van Praet - Futureproofed  
**V. Discussion**

Bukhara, the “Pearl of the East,” boasts a rich tapestry of cultures woven over centuries. Its vibrant festivals, traditional performances, and artistic expressions pulsate with the city's unique heritage. The city hosts several cultural events and festivals, namely, the Silk and Spices Festival, which is held every two years in Bukhara. During the several days of the Silk and Spices Festival

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.visit.brussels/content/dam/visitbrussels/pdf-brochures>

there are fairs where visitors can buy handicrafts, souvenirs, and silk scarves. Master classes from artisans in various fields are held in historical buildings and monuments, and sporting events draw large crowds. The festival also hosts conferences dedicated to the history and culture of Uzbekistan, and also to preserving these traditions and practices. Traditionally, the closing ceremony of the Silk and Spices Festival is held in the Poi-Kalyan Architectural Ensemble, and features traditional Uzbek folk music.

International Gold Embroidery and Jewelry Festival on 3-5 May this year was held at a high level with the participation of 220 foreign guests from 58 countries. Bukhara was awarded the status of "City of World Craftsmen" by the World Crafts Council.

On June 3-4, 2022, the city of Bukhara was declared the "youth capital of the Turkish world" in 2022 as part of the "IV Young Leaders" forum of the Organization of Turkic States.

Furthermore, the city hosts several other international forums and festivals, like International Youth Tourism Forum, International Forum on Ziyarah Tourism, International Forum on Communication on Declarations that contribute greatly on the global interest of foreigners in Bukhara.

Obviously, the city is on the center of cultural and social events as was seen in case of Brussels. However, the sustainable practices which have been implemented by the government of Brussels lack in that of Bukhara, which is what the object of our research. To make those events more sustainable, there are key points that we are going to outline:

#### Pre-Event Strategies:

- ✓ Encouraging local attendance – this could be achieved by targeting marketing efforts to attract participants who can travel to the event with minimum emissions. This might include area advertising, discounts for locals, or virtual attendance choices.
- ✓ Promoting sustainable travel options by providing clear information on public transit timetables, carpooling, bike parking, and walking paths to the event place. Partnership with public transportation authorities or ride-sharing providers help to provide special prices or discounts to event guests.

#### Event strategy:

- ✓ Selecting venues with easy access to public transportation, on-site accommodations, or within walking distance of amenities. Prioritize venues that are energy efficient and committed to sustainability.  
Consolidating events – considering co-locating events or conferences to save people from traveling to various places. This can be especially useful for events in the same sector or with similar audiences.  
Embracing virtual and hybrid event forms - this enables remote involvement while reducing the total trip impact. Virtual components may include live-streamed seminars, online networking possibilities, and pre-recorded content. This strategy has already been implemented in several forums and festivals held in Bukhara.
- ✓ Provide educational opportunities by hosting workshops or seminars on sustainable travel practices. This can teach participants how to reduce their carbon impact when traveling to events and in their daily life.

Using these measures, event organizers may dramatically minimize the transport emissions connected with their activities. This promotes a more sustainable event experience and instills a feeling of environmental responsibility among attendance.

The event industry is making strides towards greater sustainability. But integrating sustainable practices into events comes with its own set of challenges. Firstly, costs may go beyond the budget. Sustainable options can sometimes be more expensive than traditional methods. This can range from using recycled materials for decorations to sourcing locally produced food, which might have a higher price tag compared to mass-produced options. Second, attendee travel contributes significantly to the environmental effect of an event, particularly large-scale international events.



There are currently few answers, but promoting carpooling, providing carbon offset alternatives, and selecting sites that are easily accessible by public transportation can all assist.

## VI. Conclusion

Events are organized activities providing unique experiences to the participants/spectators. The event industry is a key player within the key economic sector of creative industries [14]. The importance and popularity of events are steadily increasing. Cities and destinations have given a strategic role to events in tourism and place marketing [15]. Furthermore, public groups have begun to see events as possible vehicles for urban regeneration and rejuvenation. The primary goal of these activities is to increase the competitiveness of tourism locations. Event tourism is a rapidly growing industry that contributes significantly to the travel industry by creating demand and achieving economic, social, and environmental goals while benefiting communities and destinations [16].

Event tourism may be both beneficial and detrimental to sustainability. While it has the ability to provide economic and cultural advantages, it may also have a negative influence on the environment. However, by adopting sustainable methods, event tourism may become a more responsible and environmentally beneficial activity. Taking the case of Brussels, the capital city of Belgium, we have observed several sustainability initiatives that were taken towards the protection of the environment and thus making event tourism one of the most eco-friendly types of the sphere. The authority has taken steps of minimalizing the side effects of cultural events by imposing a Climate Plan which is targeted by 2030. The Plan covers all the “green” measures that require not only stakeholders but also local and foreign individuals to take part in the action.

Bukhara, being the home of the most cultural events among the regions of Uzbekistan, clearly leads the successful direction towards increasing the tourist flow by showing its culture and national image by means of events ranging from festivals, forums, conferences, meetings and concerts. This, in turn, calls for sustainable event tourism requirements to be imposed so that the city and its image is not spoiled by event visitors.

We have outlined some recommendations for the organizers of events. First, locals could benefit from the events by the discounts or bonuses offered to promote more participation in the events. Second, transport agencies could enjoy bonuses by implementing “green” transportation for visitors. Third, educate those who take part in tourism activities about the sustainable tourism and awareness of the environmental protections. The last strategy that we have explained is virtual tours for events. This could minimize the cost, tourist traps, and at the same time the negative effects to the environment.

Event tourism has the potential to be a positive factor if it adopts sustainable methods. It can help to safeguard the environment, promote responsible consumption, and improve the overall experience for both tourists and host communities. However, it is vital to remember that sustainable event tourism is a journey rather than a destination. Event organizers must always try to improve their environmental performance and discover new methods to lessen their footprint.

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