

ENVIRONMENTAL ACCREDITATION FOR THE EVENT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Public concern for the environment has increased dramatically and as a result, the concept of sustainable development has become increasingly debated. Many industries now realise they must balance environmental and social impacts with economic objectives in order to ensure equity for future generations. The tourism industry has by no means been exclusive of this paradigm shift. The concept of 'sustainable tourism' has emerged in contemporary tourism thinking in an attempt to guide the industry along a 'greener' path.

While sustainability issues in tourism have been the subject of substantial research in recent years, academics have yet to focus on the environmental sustainability of the broad spectrum of events which are increasingly supporting tourism plans. While the event sector is inextricably linked with tourism, it is also an emerging force in its own right which deserves unique academic attention at different levels. The issue of the environmental sustainability of events is of particular importance due to its potentially large impacts on the environment.

Not only has the environmental sustainability of events not been thoroughly addressed in academic literature, but sustainable tourism accreditation schemes have generally omitted events from their scope. Green Globe 21, a global environmental accreditation scheme for travel and tourism, for example, suggests twenty-five different types of schemes to benchmark different sectors of the tourism industry ranging from cruise vessels to vineyards, but fails to directly address events. While Green Globe has developed benchmarking indicators applicable to twenty-five different tourism sectors, it has not devised an environmental benchmarking scheme applicable to special events.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the adaptability of Green Globe's environmental accreditation scheme to the event sector. First, both the concept of sustainable tourism and the negative environmental impacts of events are explored. Following this theoretical discussion, focus is given to Green Globe's design and its benchmarking schemes for accrediting tourism operators. Green Globe's most applicable benchmarking scheme is then applied to special events. By systematically applying each benchmark indicator to general event characteristics, the suitability of the overall scheme to the event sector is assessed. Finally, recommendations are provided as to the necessary changes needed in order to establish a Green Globe benchmarking scheme for events.

The paper concludes that eight different indicators can be applied to special events. Six indicators are suitable for events in their current state while two others require adjustment, one minor and one major, in order to be applicable to the events. Through these adjustments to Green Globe's current benchmarking scheme, a suitable environmental accreditation scheme for the event sector can be established.