Event management: Partner Seminar to Support Cooperation. Case: Altia

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Abstract

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This thesis presents the theoretical framework of event management combined with a case study and my own experiences.

Theoretical part consists of defining event management, different types of events and the purpose of event. It also explains event management process and event manager's role.

The empirical part of this thesis explains how partner seminar for Altia was organized and how the theories in the research on event management work on a live client example. It is also discussing how one could have used these methods during the process of the partner seminar's planning, execution and feedback.

This thesis gives the reader knowledge about the event industry and how partner seminar helps the client to support cooperation with its partners.

Keywords
Event management, Planning & Process.

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1 Introduction

Most companies organize events for different purposes during each year. The purposes vary from internal meetings to external meetings directed to a single client or even larger group events targeted to a broader audience of the company's stakeholders.

Each event is different – their budgets vary, their duration vary and the locations vary where they are held. Equally the differentiation comes from whether the event is organised in-house or outside the premises of the company. An important variable is also to balance between the purely business content coupled with social activities. And one should not forget the importance of general mingling.

When organising these different types of events companies either have their internal workforce putting a lot of hours to carry out the practicalities from planning to execution of the event. Other companies use outside support, that coupled with the resources from within the company organise the event.

It is always important that the event has a purpose. It is the ultimate responsibility of the client to answer the question "Why". Client would also need to determine the key components of the event. These are matters such as client's preferred location, socialising aspects, specific activities and the budget. For all the practicalities it is good to have outside vendors as event organisers. These come in handy due to their extensive experience in organising the practicalities surrounding the entirety of the event with all its complexities.

1.1 The aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to introduce to the reader the event management as a business sector that has a long history. Event management has a clearly defined vocabulary and terminology, the comprehension of which helps to understand the key components in the process of event organizing. The reader is introduced to different types of events, the importance of determining the purpose of the events as well as the process, key players and the role and skills required of the event manager.

For purposes of this thesis it is discussing the event industry in light of partner seminars, like the one organized for Altia. Its delimitation is to focus on business driven events as oppose to covering e.g. sport events, religious events or political events – all of which have different ways of being conducted.

All of the above is reflected to Altia's event as an example of a client organizing and managing events for partner cooperation purposes. The objective is to determine how well the theory corresponds with practicalities in a real life example. This example is one where Altia engaged an outside vendor in organizing the event from planning to execution and final follow-up after the event as a feed back to reflect whether the targets were met or not.

1.2   The author's motivation

I have been working for the event industry since 2008. The work has been very intense and it has not allowed me to focus on the academic studies done on this industry. Now, through my studies I have been able to realise that academic studies could give a theoretical framework that many companies could benefit of. These studies introduce concepts of the best practices and structure them in a form that can be utilised by other operators in the industry or principals organising the events.

In my work, I have no two similar days, projects come and go. Some projects are repeated and fine-tuned with lessons learned from past mistakes. Other projects improve our earlier practices. My motivation is that learning from the academic studies that are based on practical examples, would help us communicate with our clients on the best practices in the industry.

My task is to complete the everyday routines with passion and enjoy the ever-changing and challenging job that throws curve ball to me from left and right. And because I have been in the business for such a long time, I wanted more deeply look at what really is behind it all. The theories that can develop my ideas to the right direction will for sure be discussed in the search for the real meaning behind everyday decisions of the event industry.

2   Event management

This second part of the thesis is to get a better and more detailed understanding of event management, its terminology and the dynamics in the industry. We will discover the different aspects of events and define them to be better understood as a concept. We will go further in the next chapter to discover the different types of events that are relevant to this period of time and are the most common ones used mainly in the event industry. These further examples are just mere reflections of the industry of professionals organizing the events in a corporate world that we now live in and try to understand how this industry works. This second part will also discuss the reasons behind commercial events and mainly concentrate on the corporate side with this focus in mind advancing to our case in hand of B2B event.

2.1   History and background of events management

Events can be dated back to the Western Roman Empire, where they have been well documented in forms of events and festivals. Events have had an important role in all layers of society allowing the participating people to ascertain the identities and sharing of rituals and participating in celebrations within the communities. Events historically have been organized around public holidays of Easter and Christmas and they have been a way for the (sovereign) rulers to control the public in an organized way. As was the case especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. (Ray, Walters & Rashid 2013, 4). Today, event management has grown into a major business sector. For example in the United States it is estimated to have revenues around $5billion with more than 210.000 employees and with an estimated revenue growth during 2010-15 of 4.8%. (IBIS World: Party and Event Planners in the United States Market Research, 2015)

2.2   Definition of events

Many have defined events during the years and here is mine. An event is an organized gathering of people for a specific reason. Companies use event management as one of the tools for strategic marketing and communications. It is a project management methodology and is used by companies of all sizes. Promotional events help companies in communicating with their clients and business partners. Event management is an application of project management.

Raj et al defines events as a composition of interaction, "happenings" involving individuals in an organized way – including therefore "organization", "administration" and "control".

According to them an event is therefore a purposeful human creation. As they state it is a managed happening involving other people and have a "predetermined purpose and a location". In a short form they define event management as "…the capability and control for the process of purpose, people and place".
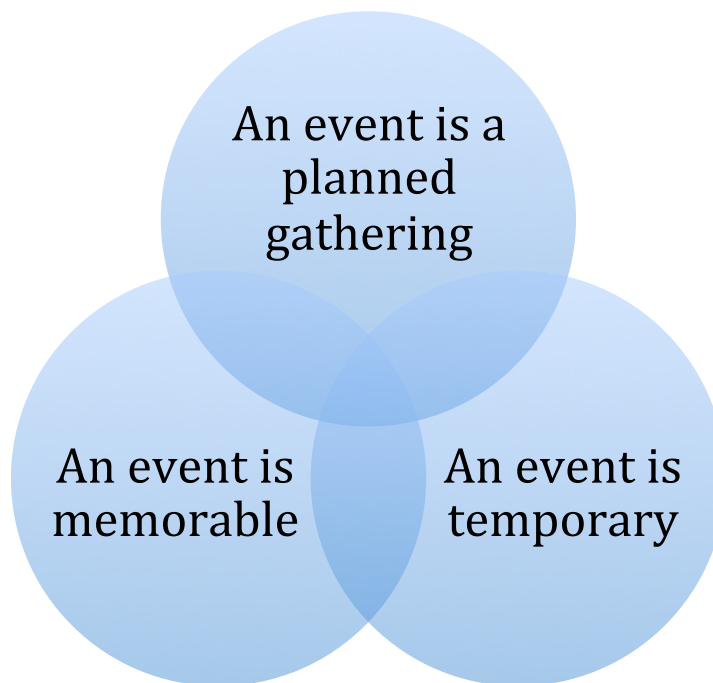

Figure 1. Aspects of an event. (Dowson & Basset 2015, 10)

In the above chart the aspect of an event, in addition to a planned gathering and that is temporary is that it is "memorable". To me this means that it is always for a special purpose with a special aim to affect people's behavior or attitude to the sponsors or organizers of the event.

There are several ways to describe events based on their types, participants, purposes etc. The most commonly used and descriptive definitions are:

- "Those non routine occasions set apart from the normal activity of daily life of a group of people" (Shone & Parry 2013)
- "An occurrence at a given place and time; a special set of circumstances, a noteworthy occurrence" (Getz 2007)
- "Every event experience is unique arising from interactions of setting, program and people" (Getz 2007)
- "A gathering of human beings, generally lasting from a few hours to a few days, designed to celebrate, honor, discuss, sell, teach about, encourage, observe, or influence human endeavors." (Matthews 2008)

Other ways of defining events can include both the angle of a customer or guest or the organizer (Getz 2005):

1. A special event is a one-time, or an infrequently occurring event outside the normal program or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body.
2. To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for an experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.

Bladen and Kennel (2012, 4) define events as having a start time, a specific program and a finishing time as oppose to events that are more spontaneous without a specific starting nor finishing time or predefined program.
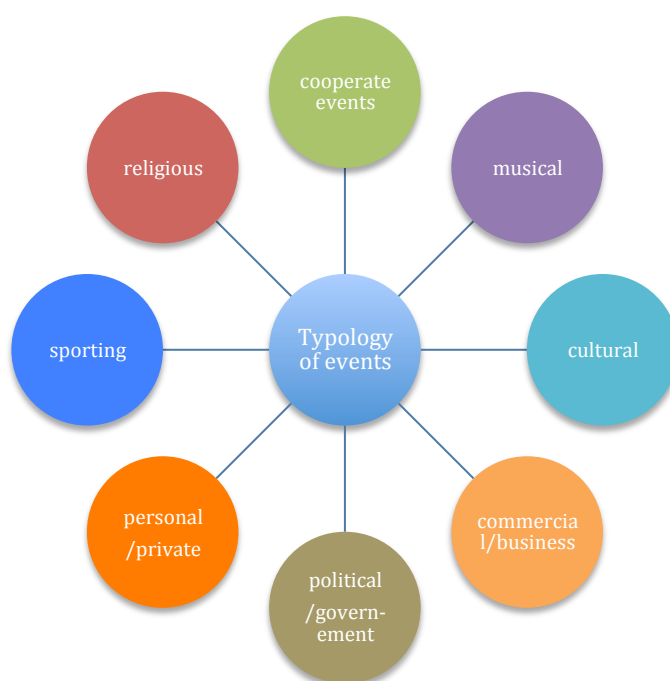
2.3 Different event types

Figure 2. Typology of event. (Ray et al. 2013, 8)

There are many ways to define events, one of them is the above mentioned Typology of events (Figure 2). Events are organized for a variety of purposes, audiences and they come in different scale. The categorization of events has been done using a variety of methods by academic researchers.

Allen (2000) defines events as "a specific ritual, presentation, performance or celebration". Goldblatt (2002) has used purpose as a way of defining the events. In his categorization the different purposes are reunion, which he describes as a gathering of people to commemorate a specific occasion. In his categorization marketing is a specific purpose, with the aim to boost sales of a specific product or service.

Marketing events are used to "encourage purchase" by customers of different types. His third definition of event is educational events, which he further classifies as being either of personal or professional nature.

And lastly he defines events that have a celebration nature. With celebration he means occasions either in a business, someone's private life or in the life of an institution. These celebration events are used to commemorate past happenings, typically between participants, who have a link of some sort to the past occasions.

Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris and Macdonnell (2012) has taken a different methodology in describing and defining events. He uses scale as the determinant of events. He talks of events taking place in immediate vicinity, in the local neighborhood – as small-scale events, or local events that serve the people in the immediate nearby area. These small-scale events don't typically attract people from very far where the event is organized.

Major events, as he calls them are already events that attract interest from a much broader audience. Whilst their origins may be in local circumstances, the attraction of the event is shared by people from a particularly larger geographical area.

His third way of describing and categorizing events by scale is calling them "Hallmark" events. These events he describes as events that draw particularly large interest also from international audiences. The examples of hallmark events he uses are e.g. Olympic Games. Using the scale methodology, one could describe hallmark events as major international trade fairs within a certain specific and common theme as aviation, environment, political theme etc.

Shone and Parry (2013, 7) have used a categorization that defines the types of events based on their aim, the objective of the event as well as what the event gives to the participants.

Events can vary a lot from each other with their aims, content and objectives. They have categorized events in different groups based on the type of the event. The different event groups are leisure, cultural, personal or organizational. When they talk about events, they highlight that a strict categorization may be misleading as an event can belong to several of the groupings at the same time. In their categorization when they define an event as Leisure, they mean e.g. sport events or recreational events. When they talk about Personal events, they look at e.g. weddings, anniversaries or birthdays as examples.

Cultural events in their definition include events organized around a heritage of some sort, or specific art events or e.g. ceremonial events to commemorate something.
And lastly when they talk about organizational events they mean commercial, political, events with a sales agenda or e.g. a charitable event.

Shone et al (2005, 6) also talk about categorizing the events based on their uncertainty and complexity. In this instance they mean with uncertainty the doubts around issues such as costs, the scheduling of the event and even the requirements posted from the technical side of the event. Organizational complexity has a variety of forms ranging from individual events to multinational events.
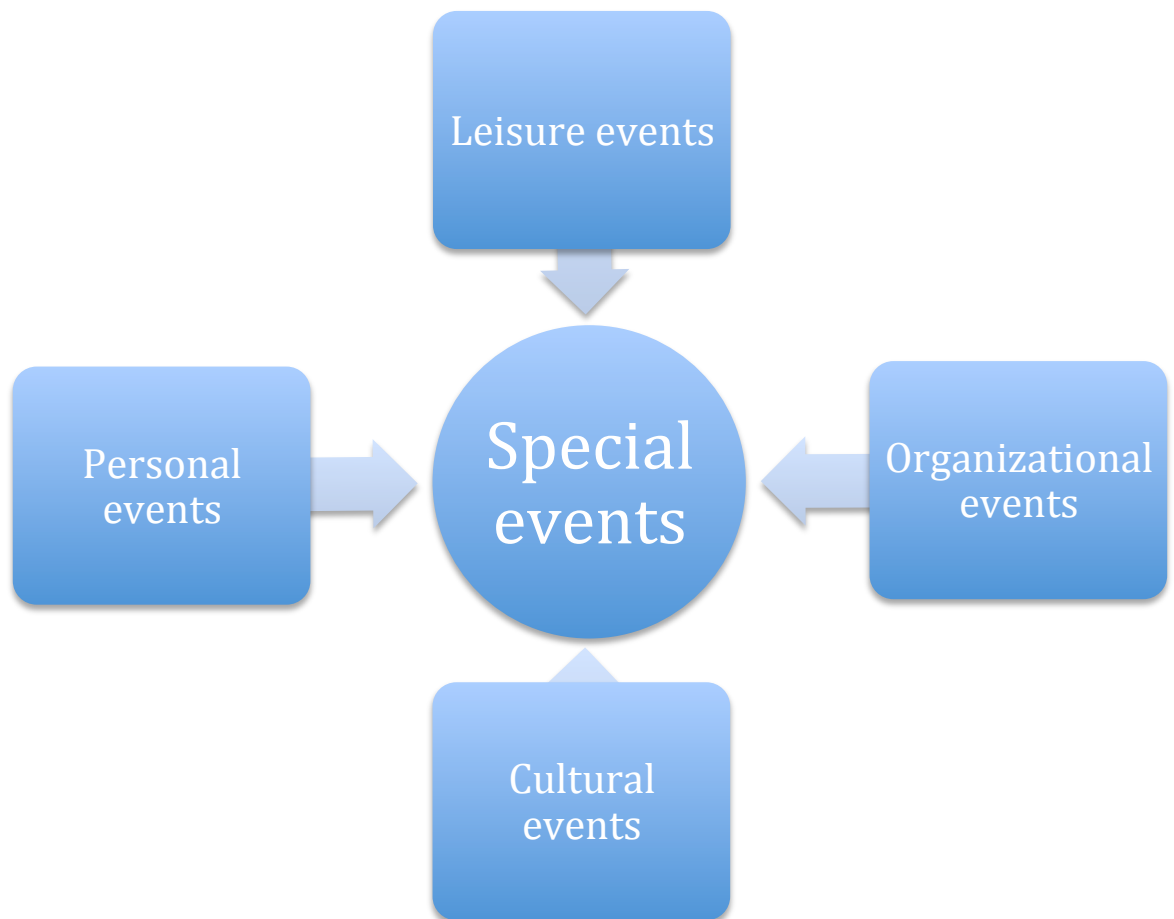

Figure 3. Categorization of events. (Shone & Parry 2013, 7)

Table 1. Categorization of events by different academic researchers. Ferdinand & Kitchin. (2012, 71.)

Getz, 1997	Bowdin et al 2006	Shone & Parry, 2004	Goldblatt, 2002
Cultural (Art)	Cultural	Leisure	Civic
Entertainment	Sports	Personal	Fairs and Festivals
Sport	Business	Cultural	Hallmark events
Educational		Organizational	Hospitality
Recreational			Meetings and Conferences
Political			Retail
Personal			Social Life Cycle
Celebration			

2.4   Purpose of events

It is of utmost importance to determine the purpose of an event. Purpose is defined as "the reason why something is done or used: the aim or intention of something" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Finnish Event Management Association (Suomen Tapahtumamark-kinointiyhdistys – STAY r.y.) defines the purpose of an event as "An experience based marketing process, where a corporation or brand meets its customer and/or other stake-holders in a predetermined situation and environment" (Emilia Kallio, Tapahtumamarkki-noinnin muistilista, (Emilia Kallio, 2015, sivu 1

http://esseepankki.proakatemia.fi/tapahtumamarkkinoinnnin-muistilista/

Kallio emphasizes that an event with a specific predetermined purpose and an aim is more effective way of marketing. She concludes that an event with a purpose is targeted to a group that is well defined and executed in a systematic way. According to her, meas-urement is important in success as well in a manner that measures the effectiveness not only on the spot but its overall impact after a longer period of time.

Another Finnish research scholar, Johanna Catani (Jyväskylän Yliopisto 2008) emphasiz-es the importance of sense of community (communality) when determining the purpose. She demonstrates that in any event people emphasize their uniqueness and freedom through belonging to the group. An event can be experienced as a feeling of externality that can cause uncertainty and anxiety in the participants.

The organizers, according to Catani, can strengthen the communality and reduce the un-certainties by creating the content that caters to cultural differences of the audience.

Based on this she further categorizes the events in three different types:
- perception
- benefit
- communality

With Perception events she determines the purpose being events that emphasize the memorability of the occasion – such as concerts, dinners or sporting events.
In benefit events the purpose is e.g. through networking improve one's own business and brand image. VIP –events are a typical example of a benefit event.
Communality events have a common purpose – feeling of security that can be reached through careful selection of the participants.

She concludes as we have demonstrated in Shone and Parry research that in many in-stances events and their purpose is a mixture of the above.

2.5   Event Process

In this thesis I have used four different sources to determine the process of the events. All four Scholars, Kilkenny, 2006, Dowson and Basset, 2015, O'Toole and Mkolaitas 2002, Ferdinand and Kitchin 2012) agree that even though events are of different nature by def-inition (see earlier "Types of Events") there are commonalities that should be adhered to when processing the event from the start to execution. It is therefore important to realize that whilst no two events are the same, that there are defined critical tasks the organizer is bound to be required to carry out for all events.

Kilkenny (2006) introduces a five W framework in organizing and processing any event. The organizer needs to be able to answer these questions:
- Why
- What
- When
- Where
- Who

This seemingly simplified model gives the organizer the necessity to respond to each of these questions. By answering these one already determines the key components of any event.

Dowson and Bassett (2015) introduce their three phased approach to event planning model (process)

- Phase 1 – Preparation
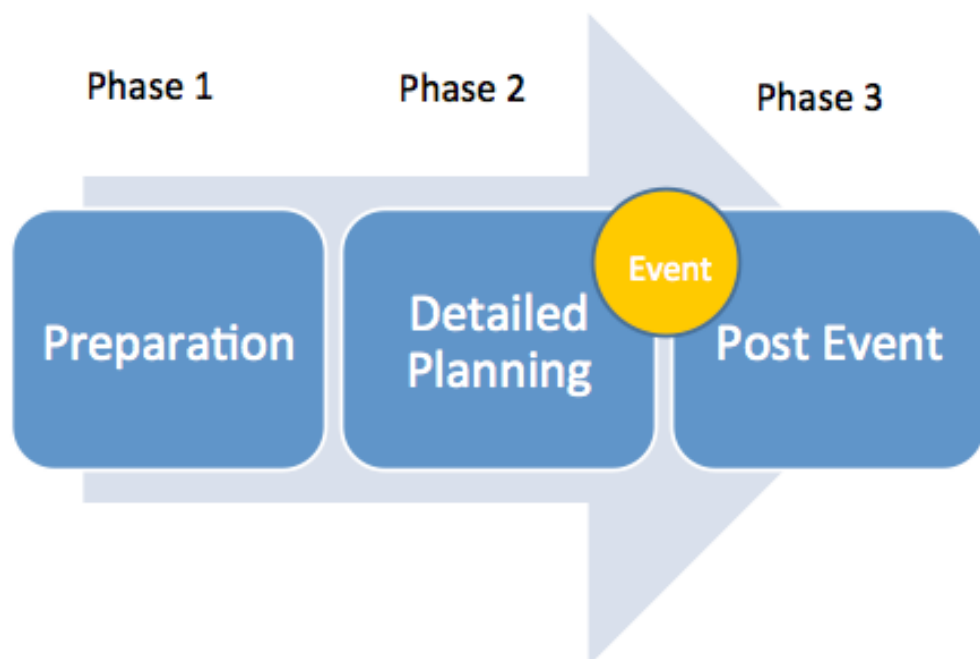- Phase 2 – Planning
- Phase 3 – Post event

Figure 4. Event Planning Process. (Dowson & Basset 2015, 22)

In the first phase – **Preparation** – the organizer is forced to determine several aspect of the event. These include:

- Event Concept
- Budget
- Establishing objectives
- Mapping the Stakeholders
- Preparing Bids
- Executing a Feasibility Study

In this phase Dowson and Bassett argue that it will allow the concept to be refined over time, and not all the elements of this phase get the same priority.

In the second phase – Detailed Planning – the main task by Dowson and Basset are

- Location Selection
- Program Plan
- Site Plan
- Logistics Plan
- Recruiting the Event Team(s)
- Contracting the Suppliers
- Promotional Plan
- Financial Planning

As the tasks grow in numbers and activities increased, Dowson and Basset suggest that this phase "can be great fun" – and many of the tasks are executed by outside suppliers.

In the last, the third phase – Post Event – Dowson and Basset emphasize the importance of evaluating "what went well and what went wrong". These are equally important in light of future events.

Dowson and Basset highlight that the value of their framework is in its simplicity. However, the diagram should only be used as a guideline – and the actual actions depend on the type of event. Secondly they remind that there will be overlap between the different phases of the planning life cycle – and multiple tasks will be taken simultaneously.

Ferdinand et al have modified the event processes in a phased structure as Dowson and Basset above. Their modification comprises of five stages:

- Initiating
- Planning
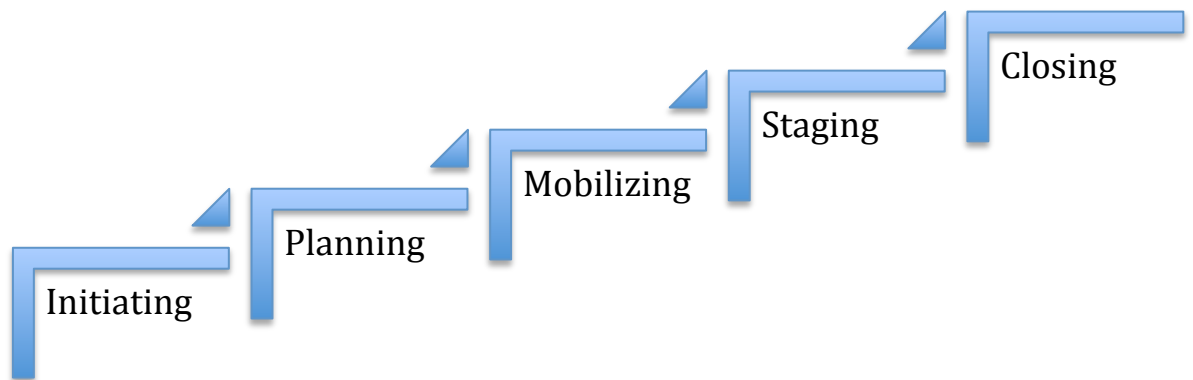- Mobilizing
- Staging
- Closing

Figure 5. Event process. (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2012, 78)

In each of these phases they determine the required input, then the process for these and lastly the output – i.e. the outcome of the proposed actions.

For the first phase - Initiating – it includes the following:

- Input
    - Event Environment,
    - Stakeholder Needs, and
    - Event Knowledge Database
- Process
    - Generate Alternatives
    - Select Event Concept
    - Create Business Case for the Event
- Output
    - Event Description
    - Business Case

For the second phase – **Planning** – it includes the following:

- Input
    - Resource Commitment for Planning
    - Event Description
    - Business Case
- Process

- o Resource Planning
- o Time Planning
- o Risk Management

For the third phase – **Mobilizing** – it includes the following:

- Input
    - o Resource Commitment for Implementation Plans
- Process
    - o Mobilize Resources
    - o Monitor Suppliers
    - o Promote Event
    - o Review Business Case
    - o Review Run Sheet
- Output
    - o Pre Event Evaluation Report
    - o Updated Run Sheet

For the fourth phase – **Staging** – it includes the following:

- Input
    - o Resource Commitment for Executing
    - o Run Sheet
- Process
    - o Execute Event Activities Following Run Sheet
    - o Monitor Event Activities
- Output
    - o Event Evaluation Report

And for the fifth and final stage – **Closing** – it includes the following:

- Input
    - o Resource Commitment for Closure
- Process
    - o Summarize Event Lessons Learned
    - o Dissolve Event Team
    - o Transfer Event Assets
- Output
    - o Update Event Knowledge Database

Their modification provides an extremely detailed working tool for each stage. As earlier, in the previous frameworks for the process, also this modification is event type specific,

will have overlapping tasks and different level of prioritization of activities depending on the event type, audience and purpose of the event.

2.6 Key players in the event industry

According to Dowson and Basset (2015) there are 3 key players in the event industry. While looking at this subject from the point of view of event organizer we have two other players in the mix. Event clients are the ones that hire professionals to organize their event. In our market it is mainly big companies that hire people to take care of their event. On the other side are suppliers and between these two are the event organizers. The suppliers play an important role, while event organizers these days need to customize each event for customer's specifications. Suppliers facilitate this need for ever-changing and different events when event organizers are not able to maintain equipment for all different possibilities. While juggling between these two key players, event organizers
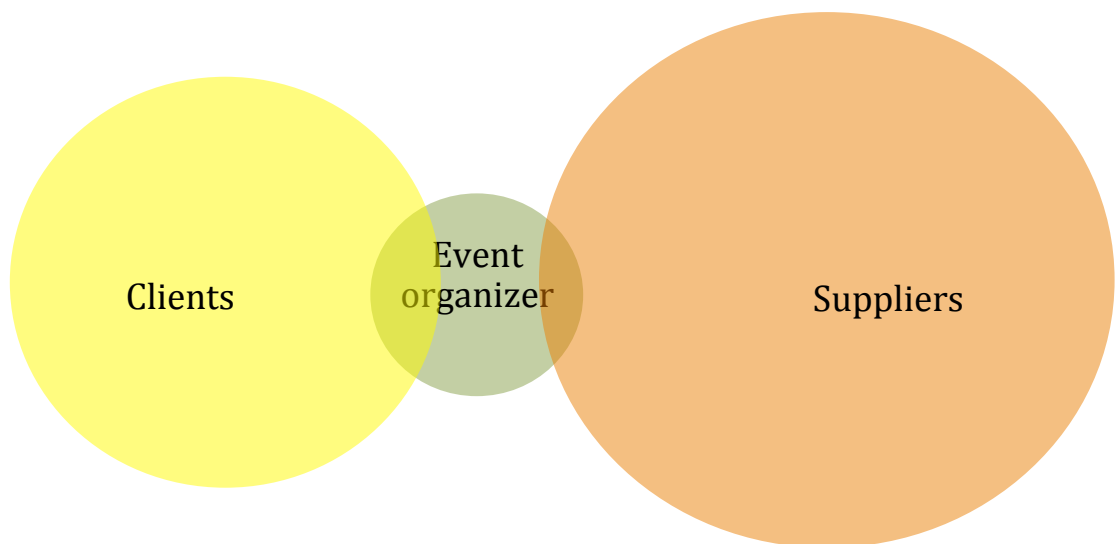

Figure 6. Key players in the event industry. (Dowson & Basset 2015, 11)

2.7 Event manager

This chapter will look at the event manger's role and needed skills to be able to work successfully in the field of event management.

2.7.1 Role

Event manager is responsible that an event is successful. The definition of event management, according to Cambridge Business English dictionary, is someone whose job is to plan and manage large events such as conferences, trade shows and parties.

2.7.2 Skills

Clients and guests have high expectations for special events. In order to succeed in this challenging situation event manager should have many skills and characters. Laura Capell (Capell 2013, 10) defines even 12 qualities that even event manager needs to have. First of all you need to be passionate about events to be able to succeed. The work is tiring but also rewarding. You have to also enjoy spending time with people and have good communication skills. This starts already in the planning process when you need to find information, send e-mails and pick up the phone. Important part is naturally the event itself and taking care of clients and quests. On the other hand you have to convince the clients from the first sales meeting to the last feedback session.
Events do not always go as planned. This is why event managers should have good problem solving skills. Contingency planning is important. That means that all potential problems are thought beforehand.

Attention to detail is important from the point of view of guest. Small things can transform a mediocre venue into the perfect event.

Time management is crucial element of events. Time manager has to be able to meet the fixed deadline and be flexible with working hours when needed. Capell lists also the skill resourcefulness. It means that event manager has to be able to do many things at the same time and be efficient. This is closely linked to organizational ability. Status reports and timing plans are import in event planning and implementation.

Every event manager should have good negotiation skills. You should be able sell your services and then get the most for your client´s money when you negotiate with suppliers. As an event manager you should be willing to take responsibility. You are responsible for lots of people. Client has given you a budget and expects to get value for many. On the other hand you have to watch carefully the costs so that organizing the event is profitable for your company. Event manager is also responsible for managing all team workers. During the event manager is responsible for guests for fulfilling their needs and also for the environment around about impacts that event might have.

Respectfulness is an important character for all managers. You have to respect the ideas of your team but above all respect your client. Event manager has to understand customer needs and respect the opinions of the client.

The role of event manager is important but she/he cannot do everything by himself. Event manager has to be able to trust other members and delegate effectively.

Figure 7. The role of event manager. (Capell 2013, 10)

3   Case Altia Partner Seminar

Altia is a leading wine and spirits company offering quality brands in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Altia produces, markets, sells, imports and exports alcoholic beverages in its market area (Altia 2015)

Altia has bought event management services from Roof Productions Ltd that is a brand activation agency. The company designs and creates global marketing, internal events, trade shows and hospitality services. It employs 10 professionals fulltime and a large number of freelancers.

3.1   Brief

Altia organizes annually Mikä Viini! Event to present the products that they import to Finland. At Mikä Viini! People are able to taste the products and discuss with industry professionals about them. It has also lectures and interviews.

For the partners that come to this event, the so called brand representatives there is an incentive on participating and representing the brands. Not only being able to show the products they represent to potential customers but also to be able to mingle with industry colleagues. For this purpose they are offered the partner seminar that is one day before the main event Mikä Viini!

Partner seminars aim is to gather all the representatives and offer an interesting day with speakers, activities and the evening. It is a chance for Altia to look in the future, present new goals and update the knowledge.

3.2   Pre work

In the case Altia Partner seminar, Altia had its own guest list. Finding the right audience was not the task of the producer, the event manager. Before the event the main jobs were to find a good key note speaker and arranging an activity for the group plus the restaurant reservations and arrangements.

The client also wanted the partners (=participants) to feel warmly welcomed and wanted to offer a special welcoming package that contained Finnish products that were mainly organic and locally produced.

3.2.1 Welcome package

Meeting the requirement of originality that reflected the "locally produced", "ethically high standard" and Finnish products was the main brief. We came up with various proposition on the products that were to be delivered to the hotel rooms of the guest. The final items chosen by our client were woollen socks, organic berry juice, raw chocolate made in Helsinki, vegetable chips and Pellegrino water. Only the Pellegrino bottled water did not match the target of being locally produced or being Finnish.

The welcoming package included also a cordial formal, yet friendly letter of welcome with all the necessary information about the upcoming over the next few days to come. The packages were ordered by and delivered to our company. Our company also managed the packing of the "Welcome Pack" at our office for the delivery to the hotels.

Things do not always go as planned. The event organiser needs to focus on every little detail. Even on such that do not necessarily get the attention of the partner seminar participants. However, for our client missing some parts of the "Welcome Pack" would had signalled our disability to deliver as promised. Therefore as an example, we checked the deliveries of the products, when they arrived. When doing this we realised that not all of the woollen socks where delivered as promised. Fortunately the person in charge of this order was coming to Helsinki and promised to deliver them to us as soon as possible. This way we got all the packages delivered to the necessary hotels in time, made sure that our client got full package in perfect order. Event management is much attention to detail.

3.2.2 Transportation

The transportation was also our responsibility. To organize the travel of all personnel and partners from and to the hotel during the day was our responsibility. The morning seminar part was held at Altia's headquarters on Porkkalankatu and the Hotel was chosen to be Hotel Indigo on Bulevardi. Outside activities were held at Meilahti and the restaurant venue was at Tervasaari.

With all these places and hundreds of people we had to arrange the transportation through an external service provider organized by us. Everything related to the transportation was done in accordance with the time plan of our client for their own personnel and their partner seminar participants.

3.2.3 Restaurant

The Restaurant needed to be a private event for the group. Our 2 choices were Kappeli and Savu. Our client had some specific requirements of the venue. The most critical one was being able to serve their own wines and waters during the event. In addition our client set another requirement that the venue needed to be nice but that it would need much of decorations to be added for the evening. And their final requirement related to the service – as a Finnish custom they wanted to serve crayfish in the beginning of the dinner – a local tradition that is typically consumed with one of the client's main products.

Our company, as the main event organizer negotiated with both alternative venues for the evening about the requirements, the pricing and all the other related details.
At the end the best value for our client with all the requirements filled was Savu – restaurant. Savu as a restaurant didn't need much decorations due to its history and picturesque environment, where the staff dresses as in the old times and the whole building just breathes history.

Our role as the event organizer was to negotiate all of these details to our customer's satisfaction.

3.2.4 Activity

As last year the group went to play football and enjoyed it much. This year we suggested a more Finnish option as a sport to be played, it was pesäpallo the Finnish baseball. There are not that many places in Helsinki area where you can play baseball where they have already made fields to be used, so we had to go with the Meilahti field and arrange coaches from PuMu Ry that is responsible for this areas games.

PuMu Ry gave us good explanations on how they would organize the game and were very clear on how to organize this kind of event for an English speaking group.

3.2.5 Printed material

Our Company offers also multiple services including producing visual material for all the events produced. In this case we took as our responsibilities to design the invitations, name badges, welcome letters, menu cards, place maps for the restaurant and the name cards for the tables. This gives us an edge to be a full service provider in the whole process.

3.3 Challenges

This project as many others has always challenges that may occur at one point or another during the process. In a case such as this with tiny details concerning the guest and the services provided. If needed to define one challenge that over all other did come at top was the constantly changing information about participants. The information about their number and participation to the activities. The printed material had to be ordered days before the actual event to be on time for the day. The sitting map with the names and places was carefully done and last changes the seating order were done at the moment when I was parking my car in front of the restaurant.

3.4 Seminar / Speakers

The seminar is the part necessary part where people meet socialize, but also come for the important updates and news about Altia and other related companies. This is a nice environment to present new ways of conduct and procedures that may have come during the past year or other new features that related service providers will come in contact. The speakers in this seminar are also interesting but bring also insight to the world of alcohol in Finland. The biggest Finnish service providers and co-operation partners come and present some aspect of their business that is relevant to the day to day tasks of this industry. Altia always has its own head that come to meet and greet and welcome everyone to this event.

3.5 Service provider co-operation

The main service providers that we needed to be in contact with were the catering for the event at Altias headquarters, the bus company for the travel, PuMu to help us with the activity of pesäpallo and Restaurant Savu. When talking with service providers we usually talk with the ones that we are familiar with, but in many cases this is not an option, such as restaurants.

3.6 The event

Go to Altia: The actual event started early in the morning with technical preparations of the event, setting up the registration desk and looking of all the decoration being in place. Coordinating with the catering for the necessary timing of the service. Decorations included also visual material such as menus. Check presentations with technician: When people started coming in I wished them welcome and offered their name badges. After people had gone in for the seminar part of the day we coordinated with the catering to clean up

and refresh the buffet table including changing the menus. The keynote speaker at the end was Tuuli Kaskinen from Demos Helsinki. The Catering service also provided a sandwich for the group that needed to be packed with the water bottle that Altia provided and banana that was organized by me. After the end of the seminar we sent the guests to their hotel for a change of clothes, from where the bus picked them up to go to the baseball field. At the same time I went to the field to organize the baseball and meet with the coaches. The game started well, but the weather was bad and it started raining. The toughest of partners decided anyway to finish the game. From the field they had time to go to the hotel and prepare for the evening. While the guests were at the hotel I headed towards the restaurant to place the seating map and place cards and check that everything was well at the restaurant. When guest came I wished them welcome, checked that everything started well and then left the guest to enjoy themselves.

3.7 After work

After work is a specific process, that eventually closes the event. It is the last task that secures that everything has been done. The only matter that was required to be done in the after work was the return of materials and cleaning up the used equipment. It was also important to control that the invoices from the restaurant and other service providers were as agreed in advance.

4   Conclusions

Event management and events as a whole is an industry which is well researched. This is due to the industry having its origins already from the Roman times. The research suggests that event management is also multidimensional. The research defines events based on their purpose that vary and can be anything from social, cultural, musical, personal, sporting, religious, political or commercial in nature, as Ray et al defines the typology of events.

In the researched material it is also evident that event management is defined as a process with distinctive different phases from planning through execution to follow-up. Different academics use different terminology to describe the different stages (such as Ferdinand et al calling it with e.g. Initiating, Planning, Mobilizing, Staging and Closing). In the researched material each one of these phases is split into smaller areas with tasks or decision making points. Each one of these contribute to a successful fulfilment of the tasks relevant to the phase's execution. These steps help to move to the next phase in the process. These processes are important as they appear to be relevant regardless of the type of event – and are repeated during the event organisation time over time again. The research has therefore come up with industry best practices – the following of which helps the organisers to complete the events' execution successfully. There are plenty of handbooks written on event management. Typically the writers are event organisers with long experience from practical work.

Equally the research agrees that there are different roles in an event management process – the client, the suppliers and in between these the event organiser.

In the empirical part I have concentrated on a commercial event which was organized for Altia. The purpose of the event was to improve the relationship of Altia with its partners. My role and the role of my company, Roof Limited, was to manage the entire organizing of the event. We were in between the client and the suppliers.

Reflecting the findings from the research materials to my empirical example one can conclude that Altia seminar had all the elements that the research describes:

1. Purpose – Altia had decided early on that they have a need to develop the relationships with their key partners. Purpose was to improve the engagement and loyalty with Altia.
2. Process was defined stages – Altia's process included specific stages. These were not necessarily called or defined with the same terminology as in the academic re-

search material, but the content in each stage resembled that of the academic research:

    a. Initiating phase – where the purpose was discussed with the client

    b. Agreeing on the program plan

    c. Determining the promotional issues

    d. Specifying the locations

    e. Contacting and contracting the suppliers

    f. Agreeing on the financials

    g. Executing the plan with all its details,

    h. After-work, and

    i. Follow-up

The conclusion is that Altia event was structured in line with what the academic research suggests. The event planning started with an RFP (Request for Proposal) to the event organizer, our company. Initial discussions with the client followed, where they communicated clearly their target for the event, which is answering the question "Why". There were defined roles for the client, for us as the event organizer and for the suppliers. The process followed a step-by-step approach. The planning was important with predetermined targets for each stage. And the event closed with a follow-up stage – where the results of the event, the successful execution of each stage were discussed.

One observation of the academic material is that whilst the material suggests of an optimal process, it cannot predict all the unforeseen and unexpected issues that may arise during the process, as was the case in our empirical case such as weather and non-performance of some suppliers.

My conclusion based on the empirical part is that whilst it is good to have an "optimal" best practice, it is not possible to predetermine step in advance. One needs to leave enough flexibility in the plan to be able to moderate as events unfold – and it is of utmost importance that someone needs to be in charge of the entire process.

4.1   Personal learning

In this chapter I will be pondering the outcomes of this thesis. I will talk more about the process of writing this thesis and what came to me during it. Also I will see how this experience will help me in the future to improve my work and use the learnings I have gathered in the process of writing my thesis.

I have learned about theories and definitions of event management and the whole field of this business that will help me in the future. This will help me systematically do these productions and further help me improve my role as an event producer. The event management is a demanding job that requires a lot of skills and coordination from the person with that task. Having worked for a long time in the field I now discovered that there is a lot of theories and literature about the business. I now understand that one can define the best practices by familiarizing with the research material. I know that this valuable information will be enhancing the competencies that are relevant for the company I work for. This will improve our services as an event organizer in the future.
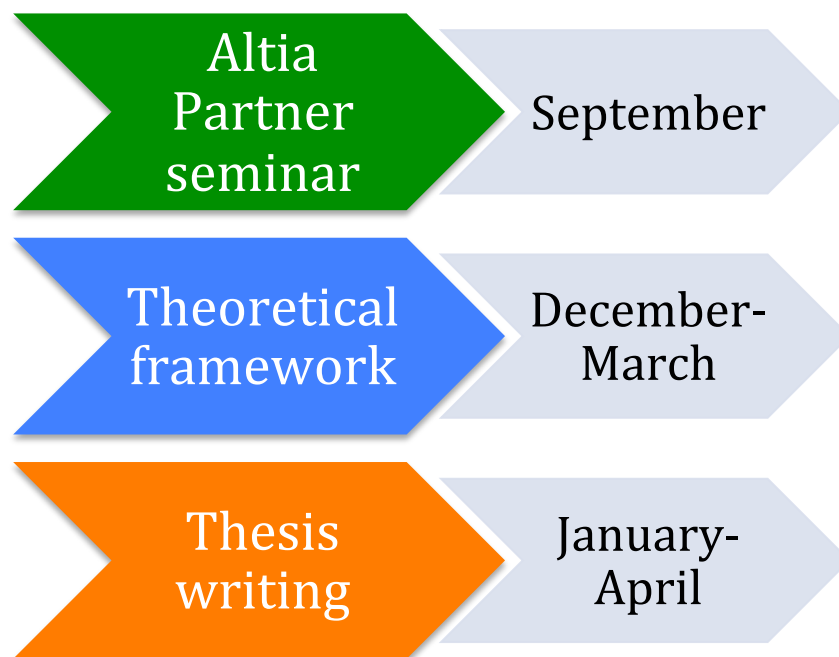
Altia Partner seminar	September
Theoretical framework	December-March
Thesis writing	January-April

Figure 8. Timeline of the process.

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