THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL EVENT PLANNING: A CASE STUDY ON IDENTIFYING THE MOST APPROPRIATE MODEL OF EVENT PLANNING.

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Signed Statement

I declare that this Dissertation has not already been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. It is the result of my own independent research except where otherwise stated.

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to use published literature and primary research to create an adapted version of Salem et al.’s event planning model. This will aid in the development of a ‘best fit model’ suitable for events students and event managers alike. It was chosen to use participants from Cardiff Metropolitan University, due to the convenience it was ideal to focus the study within this demographic.

Within this dissertation literature has been reviewed in order to strengthen the authors conclusions. Furthermore, research has been conducted in the form of two semi-structured interviews and a focus group. It was important that data was collected in order to produce an adaptation of Salem et al.’s event planning model. The model can be used as a framework to create successful events. The research aided the author when making evaluations concerning the final adapted model.

The key findings of this research highlighted an array of aspects that need to be incorporated into the final model. It has been identified that an event would benefit from two decisions the first one being made in the Decision Stage and the second in the Detailed Planning Stage. This will strengthen the final decision and allow for the incorporation of more elements of the event. A Finance Stage will also be included, as it has been found that finance, as a whole is a crucial element that had been severely overlooked. Factors directly linked to achieving event success such as: ambiance and atmosphere have been added. This will enhance the event. Within the Implementation Stage, that has found to be lacking within Salem et al.’s model, role delegation and set up have been added. This will ensure smooth running of the event and alleviate pressures from the event manager (if role delegation is conducted correctly). Lastly the Evaluation Stage has had a complete makeover – it has been divided into a three-stage set up. This allows for a more in-depth evaluation, which is a vital part of determining whether an event has been successful. The final conclusion proves the hypothetical effectiveness of Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017.

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1. Introduction
1.1 Setting the Scene

“Following an event-planning process will help to guide an event organizer through the different stages of planning an event and make sure they don’t overlook anything important” (Dawson and Bassett, 2015, p. 20).

Dawson and Bassett (2015) continue to discuss event planning, identifying that experience is helpful when planning an event. Additionally, they also examine that to conduct a successful event the planning process must occur within a considerable time frame (size dependent). Event managers possess knowledge that informs them that perfecting aspects prior to an event increases success rates. Consequently they use an event-planning model as a systematic framework. Getz (2007) explains that event management is a profession that is fast gaining global recognition and furthermore, has been established as an academic program. The rise of event management directly reflects the escalation of events being held worldwide. This evidence provoked the author to review information available to discover whether there was enough material explaining how to create a successful event. The author was able to identify a variety of event-planning models, however was surprised by the lack of information on the success of utilising each of these models. The author questions ‘do these models therefore work and are there aspects that need improving?’ These questions are important, as without knowing this material students of event management and event managers within industry are unable to select a model with clarity of the success it will deliver. The research conducted by the author will contribute to developing an answer for these imperative questions.

1.2 Research Rational

The UK’s events industry as a whole is worth £42.8 billion to the UK’s economy with a staggering £30.9 billion of that worth coming from business/communication events (Booker, 2016). Therefore, the successful running of events is imperative, which directly links to the framework that is used to create it. Furthermore Booker (2016) also states that over 85 million attend events annually with 83% of agencies expected to increase their headcount over the next year. The expansion of the events industry means the need for more event managers. The author therefore evaluated that having a successful event-planning model would provide new event managers with an inclusive framework from which to work. This information portrays rational as to why the author
has chosen to research further the use of event planning models and how they can be improved.

1.3 Identifying the Research

The research aims to fill gaps in the literature that has been identified in section 2. Whilst there has proved to be vast information on each specific section necessary to run successful events e.g. components within event-planning models, information of the models as a whole and how they are used is lacking. Therefore, research in to the use of event-planning models and how to utilise them has been deemed necessary. The research aims to provide event managers with an improved adaptation of Salem et al’s. event-planning model.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this dissertation is to use published literature and primary research to create an adapted version of Salem et al’s. event planning model to develop a ‘best fit model’ suitable for events students and event managers alike.

In order to achieve the aim the following objectives will be considered:

1. Critically analyse event-planning models in order to identify the most practical model to adapt for events students and event managers alike.

2. Evaluate and conduct a critical literature review around event planning, using appropriate academic resources.

3. To examine the extent of information gathered from an academic lecturer, an industry lecturer and Event Management students from Cardiff Metropolitan University in order to create an adapted event-planning model.

4. Evaluate the primary research collected in order to create Smith’s model of event planning, 2017 using information gathered in order to ensure the models success.

5. To further develop theory into event planning models in order to create a conclusive end model.
1.5 Outlines of Chapters

Previous to this introduction the abstract, acknowledgements and contents page can be found. Chapter 2 consists of the literature review; this consists of an in depth analysis of already published literature on the topic of event planning models – specifically Salem et al’s. model. The literature review clearly explains key themes, issues, concepts, theories, arguments and conclusions concerned with event planning models. It also goes on to look in depth at considerations that may affect the way in which the author will conduct her primary research. Overall this chapter aids the author in the decision of which event-planning model she will use to adapt as an end result.

Chapter 3 consists of methodology used within the author’s primary research. Not only does this chapter highlight the methods used, it also identifies methods avoided due to their non-compliance with the information that is required by the author. Attention is given to methods including: focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, a justification is provided as to why methods were used with consideration to validity, reliability and ethics.

Chapter 4 provides a definitive analysis of the results and discussion, obtained through the primary research conducted. Data collected through focus groups and semi-structured interviews is compared and directly linked to the literature review. This not only provides agreements to already published literature but also contradictions that prove thought provoking to the author.

Chapter 5 proves extremely essential to this dissertation as it draws together all the findings of the literature review and primary research combined. Additionally this chapter is able to summarize the author’s decisions on why to adapt Salem et al’s. model and prove why components were added or removed from the original model. This chapter will also evaluate the aims and objectives, recommendations for future research and recommendations for any other stakeholders.
1.6 Summary

This chapter has given the reader a brief insight around the research rationale. This was important for the understanding of why the author felt it necessary to write around the topic of event-planning models. The aims and objectives of the thesis have also been clarified so that the reader is able to understand what this dissertation wants to achieve. The reader will now be provided with an in depth literature review, an insight into the methods used to gather research and a discussion of results gathered through the research.
2. Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

Within this literature review the author will provide an assessment of a variety of literature that is linked to successful event planning. Specific areas that will be reviewed include event planning models and the 4 main stages of event planning; the decision stage, the detailed planning stage, the implementation stage and lastly the evaluation stage. The author will identify and analyse event planning models to further her research and discover which aspects of each model prove useful or not when planning an event. The author will go on to evaluate her findings within a summary, therefore being able to identify any gaps in the research that additionally will aid her with focusing her research. Finally the author will endeavour to create an adapted model of successful event planning by analysing already published data and data collected through primary research (See Figure 2.2, Chapter 4).

2.2 Event Success – What makes it?

There are multiple different theories on what it is that makes an event successful. One of the main considerations is correctly evaluating an event in order to find how it was deemed successful, or not. Sharples et al. (2014) conclude that creating an ‘experience’ is the most critical aspect of event success. They further go on to explain that one can achieve this by ensuring event design is of ‘high quality’ in order to provide attendees with the best experience. Gerritsen and Van Olderen (2011) concur as to defining what creates event success. They state that experience is an important factor within event planning. Additionally, they explain that the experience can create emotions for attendees, e.g. enthusiasm or aversion, leading to attendees concluding that the event had been successful. In contrast Berridge (2007) suggests that event success comes from logistics, planning and management. Shone and Parry (2003), on the other hand, suggest that atmosphere and ambience hold great power when evaluating what constitutes a successful event. These contrasting opinions show perspectives so the author is able to analyse event success.
2.3 Event Planning Models

2.3.1 Salem et al.’s. Model of Event Planning

The author has identified that there is a variety of event planning models that one may wish to use as a framework for the successful planning of an event. Event managers utilise event-planning models in order to plan the success of an event. Tum, Norton and Wright (2006) devised a similar model mirroring the divide of Salem et al.’s. model to create a four-sectioned model. Furthermore, the titles of each section are similar to the ones illustrated in Salem et al.’s. model. However, it is the more in depth process that differs. The reason for utilising titles from Salem et al’s model is due to their prevalence. Salem et al.’s. model is ‘circular’ (this informs us that the process is continual). Salem et al.’s. model shows a “framework for the systematic identification and deconstruction of four major stages of event development” (Yeoman et al. 2003, p.14). Within this model the four stages include; the decision stage, the detailed planning stage, the implementation stage and the evaluation stage. Salem et al’s. model of event planning can be adapted to fit the format of any event – these events can range from life-stage events such as weddings and graduations to life-cycle events such as funerals and birthdays. Dowson and Bassett (2015) have also compiled a model for successful event planning – they have copied the first two stages and the last stage of Salem et al.’s. model due to the effectiveness of these stages. However, the difference with their model is that it does not include a stage for the event itself. This therefore creates a margin of error as monitoring progress of contingency plans and the shutting down process have not been reviewed in enough detail to ensure successful running.
DECISION

Catalyst

Establish management board

Outline feasibility study

Aims and objectives

Decision

DETAILED PLANNING

Event definition

Financial study

Venue planning and operations management

Event scheduling

Marketing

Human resource management

EVALUATION

Sponsors

Community

Event organizers

Outcome and process

Customer

Environment

Staff

IMPLEMENTATION

Shutting down

Dealing with contingencies

Monitoring progress
2.3.2 Getz Model of Event Planning

Figure 2.1: Salem et al’s. Model of Event Planning.
“Events by definition have a beginning and an end. They are temporal phenomena, and with planned events the event program or schedule is generally planned in detail and well published in advance” (Getz, 2012, p.37) Getz further explains that events are commonly found in one specific place and can often be described as tangible (unless a momentum of an event is provided). Getz’s model of event planning (see figure 2.2) is quite dissimilar to the other two models discussed in this literature review. Getz’s model shows a very linear approach to event planning and additionally has a more strategic approach to the plan as a whole (which can be seen as a negative). When choosing a planning model one must identify whether the event that they are planning is a re-occurring event or a new event as this will guide the user to choosing a model. Getz’s model of event planning, as explained by Bowdin et al. (2006), is incorporated with “the process associated with event planning in the context of a new event and those attracted through the bidding process” (Bowdin et al. 2006, p. 118). Getz’s model of event planning is criticized by Shone and Parry (2004) for being too complicated and thus not practical to use. Hence the authors decision not to adapt this event-planning model.
Figure 2.2: Getz’ Model of Event Planning
2.3.3 Tum, Norton and Wright 2005 – Event Operations Management Model

Why use Tum, Norton and Wrights Event Operations Management Model? “Using this model, the event manager should be flexible enough to return to any one stage and re-investigate changes as they occur” (Tum et al. 2006, p. 5). Having this flexibility to return to a specific stage reassures event managers that not only can they re-visit sections they are also able to alter them as the event develops. This is one of the advantages of a more linear model. Ferdinand and Kitchin, (2012) support Tum, Norton and Wrights Event Operations Management Model and even use a similar linear method when adapting their own model. This model has been deemed appropriate for the management of event operation. “Incorporated into the model is an ideal model for managing an actual event, based on project management literature” (Tum et al. 2006, p. 8). The author uses these models to inform the development of an adapted model. This model was created from a synthesis of event management literature, and project management. Thus it was decided not to use Tum et al’s. model. This decision ensures that researching pure events literature and primary research will inform the final model.
Figure 2.3: Tum, Norton and Wrights Event Operations Management Model
2.4 The Decision Stage

2.4.1 Aims and Objectives of Event Planning

Creating aims and objectives for an event provides a base that allows the event to be able to grow and develop. Bowdin et al. (2003, p. 70) states “core objectives are a core element in the planning process and are distinguished by several key features”. Furthermore, he explains the need for SMART objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific). The use of SMART objectives offer direction to all those involved with the event, additionally Bowdin et al (2006) agrees that aims and objectives are a critical part of successful event planning. He further explains that stipulating aims and objectives early on provides those involved with a benchmark to highlight their progress and reflection on outcome.

2.4.2 Management Boards

“Identifying event project manager, planner or conference coordinator. This is the most critical piece of the planning process. A person should be identified as the one for planning and execution of the event” (Braase and Grgich, 2011, p. 8). Braase (2011) advocates that establishing a management board is the most critical step in event planning. However, in Armstrong’s (2001) opinion other aspects such as, budget takes precedence over the establishment of a management board. The establishment of a management board comes afterwards to ensure that the people who will be organising the event will be able to deal with certain aspects such as, the budget and work roles. When establishing a management board the event manager should be able to; delegate, motivate and create teams (Raj et al, 2009). The author will explore further the sequence of event planning.

2.4.3 Catalysts in Event Planning

“Event’s arise from a variety of circumstances and have been categorized using a number of methods. Researchers have used purpose, scale and circumstances as a means of categorizing events” (Ferdinand and Kitchin, 2012, p.71). The information is
relevant because the framework in event planning originates from the type of event it is or ‘why is the event happening’. Defining the event helps the event planner to initiate the event planning process and move onto the development stage.

2.4.4 Accessing Feasibility

Each event-planning model differs slightly depending on the author or what the event planning structure is being used for. However, after analysing the 3 models discussed in sections 2.3.1 – 2.3.3 it is apparent that each of these contain a section dedicated to a feasibility study. Feasibility studies can be carried out for any event but usually “a formal feasibility study is carried out for larger, more complex, more elaborate events, which in turn usually means that the hosting of the event is more costly” (Dowson and Bassett, 2015, p. 40). Even though a feasibility study may appear costly it is an effective way to evaluate the potential for success … this is especially relevant when the event is a new or unique and where there are no established guidelines for the planning process.

2.4.5 Overall Decision

“Most planning for events begins with the knowledge of what you want to do – honouring an individual, bringing a group together, conducting a particular ceremony” (Harris, 2007, p.7). However to arrive at this decision stage it has been shown in sections 2.4.1-2.4.4 that aims and objectives, management boards, catalysts and feasibility studies must all be taken into consideration before finalizing the decision to hold the event.

2.5 Detailed Planning Stage

2.5.1 Event Definitions

In order to chose an event-planning model firstly define the event that you want to plan. There are a variety of ways in which you may categorise an event. Dowson and Bassett, 2015 explain that you can classify an event by type; local events, major events, hallmark
events or mega events. Moreover, you could define an event by frequency (e.g. Christmas) geography (e.g. access to infrastructure), sector (e.g. banking) or size (e.g. large/small scale). Berridge (2007) provides an in depth list of event genres, this list gives us a clearer understanding of how different events may be defined:

- Business and Corporate events
- Cause – related and fundraising events
- Exhibitions, expositions and fairs
- Entertainment and Leisure events
- Festivals
- Government and Civic events
- Hallmark Events
- Marketing Events
- Meeting and Convention Events
- Social/life-cycle events
- Sports events

From this list the reader is able to appreciate the vast selection of event typologies that exist, additionally they can then place their event into one of these genres effectively establishing an event definition.

2.5.2 Event Finance

“Very little research has been conducted on events as businesses, so their comparative financial operations are little understood” (Getz, 2007, p.282). In Getz (2007) perspective a gap in the market is presented in terms of events finance, this will therefore be a focus for the author when conducting her primary research. On the other hand Bladen et al. (2012) provides a thorough process to follow when creating and planning a budget (See Figure 2.4). It links the budget to the aims and SMART objectives of the event in order to ensure that the budget and the event correctly are compatible.
2.5.3 Event Marketing

Analysing the literature about event marketing helps the author to understand that marketing is an essential component to consider, considering the potential success or downfalls that an event may encounter. O’Toole (2011) backs this up by reiterating the fact that marketing done correctly at the feasibility stage of an event ensures that the event will have enough interest in order to proceed. He also outlines that the marketing at the event development stage will also contribute the success of the event and ensure that full attendance capacity is reached or that RSVP’s are returned with positive response. A vital aspect of the event marketing process is that it successfully creates an image of guest’s expectations. Marketing done correctly portrays an initial representation of the event and is the first aspect that the customer/guest sees. Therefore the marketing should reach out to specific market segments, as it is fundamental that the correct audience is being attracted. O’Toole has produced a “Marketing Process” this shows each section that should be considered when marketing an event (See Figure 2.5). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2015) suggest that digital media has revolutionized
the way that marketing is undertaken. Additionally, they explain that to succeed within the future of marketing organisations must be up to date with latest technology trends. They also explain how social media marketing has become the fastest growing medium to market products of services in the 21st century.

![Figure 2.5: The Marketing Process](image)

### 2.5.4 Venue Planning and Operations

“It is essential that you know all of your event requirements before starting to check the availability of venues. What may seem initially to be the perfect fit may turn out to be inadequate once you take into account all of your needs. Go in with your wish list and know where you are willing to compromise and where you are not” (Allen, 2009, p. 203).

Allen suggests that making a list of requirements that your venue must have is an effective way of optimizing your venue selection. Aspects that an event planner may consider looking at when selecting a venue are; size, location, facilities capacity provided and price. Shone, Parry and Parry (2013, p. 167) concur “venue finding is probably one of the first most important aspects of the development phase of an event.”
Additionally, they are in complete agreement with Allen that in order to find a suitable venue knowing your requirements and creating a ‘tick list’ ensures successful venue selection. Event planners should remember that the venue must cater for the market segment that it is being used for. The venue is such an imperative part of an event and the attendees will view the venue usually for the first time on the day of the event – therefore it must reach all expectations that guests have.

2.5.5 Event Scheduling

Event scheduling can be a complex task; it can be very simple for small-scale events and grow in difficulty as the event grows. Aspects that need to be taken into consideration include: order of activities and time management, without these two components a schedule could not be made. A schedule ensures the smooth running of an event and allows everyone involved to know what is happening and when. Additionally, if a schedule is produced for the staff it gives them clarity and transparency in designated work roles and sequence. (Tum, Norton and Wright, 2005). Schedules can be produced in a variety of different ways – selecting methodology is defined by the event planner and the type of event themselves. Some methods include, lists, graphs, tables or Gantt charts.

2.5.6 Human Resource Management (HRM) in Event Planning

“One of the most distinct features of events is the management of the people needed to design and stage the festival, exhibition street parade or competition” (Van Der Wagen and White, 2014, p. 13). This relates directly to the need of a thorough human resource plan in order to ensure the wellbeing of all your employees and those involved in the event. “The Harvard model is an ideal model to use within the context of the public sector, because it is useful in tracking how a change in HRM policy choices affects HRM outcomes” (Brunetto, Farr-Wharton et al. 2011, Pg. 553). Furthermore, this model goes on to relate to how employees may be treated, paid, work load etc. It also reflects directly to how human resource management is then carried out based of those factors. The Harvard model outlines clearly the HR’s policies of most companies. They include “human resource flows, reward systems, employee influence and work systems
Which in turn lead to the ‘four C’s’ or HR policies that have to be achieved: commitment, congruence, competence and cost effectiveness.” (The Harvard map of HRM, 2015). Using the Harvard model allows event planners to have knowledge of HR processes, when running an event. Ethics and corporate responsibility also fall under the HRM umbrella – these aspects should be taken into consideration in a well-rounded HR strategy (Figure 2.6)

**THE HARVARD FRAMEWORK FOR HRM**

![The Harvard Framework for HRM]

Figure 2.6: The Harvard Framework for HRM

### 2.6 Implementation Stage

#### 2.6.1 Monitoring Progress of an Event

“Event monitoring is the process of tracking the progress of an event through various stages of implementation, and enables factors governing the event to be adjusted” (Bowdin *et al*, 2003, p. 272). There are several ways one may choose to monitor an event,

- Ticket sales
- Attendance numbers
- Watching the budget
• Observations during event (guest reaction, event continuity etc.)
Not only will monitoring these aspects improve the overall quality of the event itself it can help inform planning for future events. Expanding this monitoring an event can be seen as a crucial part in order to limit mistakes and ensure smooth running.

2.6.2 Contingencies in Event Planning

When planning events it is important that one must consider contingency plans. An event may be hindered by factors such as: natural disasters, terrorist attacks, the venue backing out/shutting down, weather etc. Armstrong (2001) tells us his suggestions to take several precautions to establish an effective contingency plan:

• Establish a contingency task force or a subcommittee to look at the disaster potential of the event. Most police and fire departments will assist with this effort, and your insurance people will, too.
• Coordinate with the site staff to create an emergency plan.
• Create a chain of command for the event that may include site and agency staff, as well as your event committee.
• Review the plan with all event staff and event volunteers.
• Outline key plan elements in the program printed for your event.

Furthermore having a contingency plan outlined allows the customers that you are planning the event for to feel a sense of confidence in the event management.

2.6.3 Shutting Down Events

Bladen et al. (2012) explains that an efficient project shut down will consists of a few major aspects. First of all the team running the event should be briefed on exactly what an event shut down would consist of so any emergencies can be dealt with efficiently. The team leader should compile a list of roles that must be completed during a shutdown e.g. balancing the books, ensuring venue is left as per contract, making sure a complete itinerary is taken (before and after) and the closing of contractors and suppliers who are no longer required. To complete a successful close down the event manager should have paid all outstanding fees and closed any open ended contracts in order to finalise any agreements they may have made. The shut down process is the penultimate stage
of any reputable event and therefore must be conducted with proficiency and attention to detail by all involved in this stage.

2.7 Evaluation Stage

2.7.1 Outcomes and Process

Before the evaluation process can take place the event planner/management board must finalise a criteria in which they will use to evaluate the overall success and/or negatives of the event. This is a vital stage that must not be underestimated as it can inform future decision-making. For example, how to improve or not to hold subsequent events. Successfully evaluating the event entails gathering a lot of information such as: profit/losses, ticket sale numbers, satisfaction rates, return customers, opinions of; venue, catering and entertainment etc. Bladen et al. (2012, p. 372) showcases Getz (2005) seven practical criteria for investigating management time and resources in the process of evaluation:

- Identify and solve problems
- Find ways to improve management
- Determine the worth of the event or it’s program
- Measure success or failure
- Identify and Measure impacts
- Satisfy sponsors and other stakeholders
- Gain acceptance, credibility and support

Furthermore the evaluation stage should be an ongoing process throughout the event, whereby the event managers collect relevant qualitative and quantitative data to use to analyse the events success. The decision to use qualitative or quantitative data will come when the data that is needed to be collected is identified. It is vital to understand why one must evaluate – “Fundamentally, event evaluation is a useful means of determining success or failure” (Ferdinand and Kitchin, 2012, p. 175).
2.8 Summary

As a result of the literature the author will be testing the Salem et al. model (see figure 2.1) as part of the primary research. Furthermore, the author will then suggest possible amendments if appropriate. This literature review has ensured the researcher has focused the primary research to fill gaps of information. For example, it has been difficult for the author to obtain sufficient criticisms of event planning models and therefore evaluating the models proved difficult. To gain information on this topic the researcher will conduct qualitative research in order to reach an end goal of designing an event-planning model that is suitable to give to first time student event planners and event managers alike. The literature gathered has proven to the author that Salem et al’s. model of event planning is the best fit to use as a base model. Subsequently the author will adapt it using information gathered from Event Management lecturers and students. The author has decided to adapt Salem et al’s. model due to:

1. An excellent iterative approach which ensures continuous improvement for events
2. Authors such as Yeoman et al (2003, p.14) describing the model as “a framework for the systematic identification and deconstruction of four major stages of event development”
3. Several authors describing the model as adaptive
4. Other authors have also utilised Salem et al’s. model as a base model of which they have adapted

Overall the literature gathered has been informative and gaps can now be identified and filled with the use of primary research.
3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction
Within this chapter of Methodology the reader will be able to clearly identify the methodology that the author has chosen to use in order to gather primary data. Furthermore, it will highlight which methods were chosen and why other methods were avoided. Additionally, the author will present valid reasons to as why methods used were the most beneficial to aid the research conducted. The author will subsequently endeavour to explain whom her sample groups were, how many participated and why the participants were chosen. Lastly a look into the validity and ethics of the research will be conducted before finishing with a justification of the authors’ personal data collection process and data analysis methods.

3.2 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

“By terms qualitative research we mean any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Corbin, 1990, p.17). Moreover, qualitative research allows for analysis of different perspectives, ideas and thoughts from collecting data through a variety of different channels e.g. interviews and focus groups. Flick (1998, p.5) presents a preliminary list of features of qualitative research that includes:

- Appropriateness of methods and theories
- Perspectives of the participants and their diversity
- Reflexivity of the researcher and the research
- Variety of approaches and methods in qualitative research

Unlike quantitative research qualitative research can be very much based on opinions of others – rather than statistics and numbers. This therefore allows for a wider interpretation of data collected in order to sometimes manipulate the findings. “Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, p.11). This statement indicates the depth of information that a research is able to gather though qualitative research that will be beneficial to the over all project.

One of the main benefits of using qualitative research is “to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known” Having the power
to gather this information could potentially allow the author in possession to uncover gaps in literature which additionally could not be done as effectively though quantitative methods of data collection. Moreover qualitative research allows researchers to study information that may be difficult to access such as feelings, experiences and thoughts (Urquhart, 2013). With these positive aspects of course come the drawbacks … Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 346) explain, “while all researchers want to do quality qualitative research, many qualitative studies are lacking quality. They are superficial and sparse.” Further to this analysis they have identified some of the components that may decrease the quality of the research. Some of these components include: Methodological consistency, sensitivity to participants and date and clarity of purpose.

3.3 Characteristics of Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is specifically designed to be tangible and consists mainly of numbers and statistics that are found through analysing the data that has been collected by the researcher. Furthermore the data collected is then put into graphs and tables to illustrate it and then further analysis the data effectively and efficiently (Denscrombe, 1998). Punch (2014, p. 16) goes on to explain that quantitative research “is empirical research where the data is in the form of numbers,” this backs up Denscrombe’s findings. Analysing quantitative research can be quite a skilful task for which one should obtain specific training however it can be done on a more simplistic level dependent on the research information that has been gathered. Quantitative data is often collected through tests or specific answer questionnaires. The data collected must then be coded, grouped and then presented in a specifically chosen format that represents the data effectively. Lastly the graph, chart or table would be analysed by the researcher to produce findings that would help the researcher with his/her project (Bryman and Cramer, 2011).

3.4 Difference between Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research
Below a conclusive table portrays the differences between Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research. Not only does this table highlight the dissimilarities between the two research methods, it also provides a basis for the decision the author made when choosing what methods she would use to gather information. The first reason consists of the depth of information that qualitative research provides to the project. Secondly, qualitative research helps to fulfill the aims of the thesis that requires the author to find gaps in the literature and to successfully fill them by analysing her own data gathered. Lastly the use of focus groups and semi-structured interviews ensures rich information that portrays the participant’s thoughts, ideas and own experiences. Thus providing reason as to why the author made the informed decision to conduct qualitative research. The author dismissed the mixed methods approach to use both qualitative research and quantitative research. This was due to collection of in-depth information about successful event planning model’s not requiring high levels of numerical or statistical data to be obtained. Additionally, the use of qualitative research was imperative due to the importance of perception of events. Opinions are a vital part of event success and qualitative research provides in depth information.

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<th>Qualitative Research</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Counts occurrences across a large population</td>
<td>- Looks deep into the quality of social life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses strategic and reliability to validate generalization from survey samples and experiments</td>
<td>- Locates the study within particular settings which provide opportunities for exploring all possible social variables; and set manageable boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Attempts to reduce contaminating social variables</td>
<td>- Initial foray into the social setting lead’s to further, more informed exploration as themes and focuses emerge</td>
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<td><strong>Beliefs:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Beliefs:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Conviction about what it is important to look for</td>
<td>- Conviction that what it is important to look for will emerge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confidence in established research instruments</td>
<td>- Confidence in an ability to devise research procedures to fit the situation and the nature of the people in it, as they are revealed</td>
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- Reality is not so problematic if the research instruments are adequate; and conclusive results are feasible
- Reality contains mysteries to which the researcher must submit, and can do no more than interpret

<table>
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<th>Steps:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- First decide the research focus</td>
<td>- Decide if the subject is interesting</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Then devise the research instruments</td>
<td>- Explore the subject</td>
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<td>- Then approach the subject</td>
<td>- Let focus and themes emerge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Devise research instruments during process</td>
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Table 3.1 – Comparison between Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research

3.5 Qualitative Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups are specifically designed to obtain information from a group of specially selected participants. Edmunds (1999) suggests that focus groups provide a flow of input and interactions related to the topic or group of topics that the group is centered around. Additionally, “a focus group is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures” (Krueger and Casey, 2000, p. 4). The specificity of participants within a focus group helps the research to heighten their chances of getting information that will be of value to the project. “Focus groups produce qualitative data that provides insights into the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of participants” (Krueger, 1994, p. 19). Krueger, 1994, further explains that focus groups are produced through gathering a group and then providing open-ended questions that can result in discussion amongst the group with the output of useful data. With this clear outline and evaluation of focus groups the author decided that this would be an ideal form of data collection for her project. (See focus group questions, appendix 5)

3.5.2 Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews have a strong resemblance to an everyday conversation, the only difference between the two being that the unstructured interview is focused n a
specific, outlined objective (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Further to this an unstructured interview can come across as extremely casual and may go off track leading to the information gathered being deemed unsuitable (Silverman, 2005).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003), have outlined the following 5 key features of an unstructured interview:

1. Combination of structure and flexibility
2. The interview is interactive in nature
3. Researcher will use a range of probes and other techniques to achieve depth of answer in terms of penetration, exploration and explanation
4. Interview will be generative in the sense that new knowledge or thoughts are likely to be created
5. Most likely conducted face-to-face

With this information the author deemed the unstructured interview an unfit method of research due to the possibility of straying to far from the proposed objectives.

3.5.3 Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview is also known as a ‘topical’ or ‘guided’ interview. “*With the more typical type – the topical or guided interview – the researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects the way the participant frames and structures the responses*” (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 144). Semi-structured interviews therefore allow the researcher to guide the interview while still allowing the participant a sense of control, which in turn could provoke much more in depth responses from the participant. The researcher has therefore concluded that this would be a beneficial method of research as her participants have wide experience in the proposed topic and therefore this would stop any restrictions on participant’s answers. (See interview questions, appendix 4).

3.5.4 Surveys
Surveys consist of questions that a researcher would like participants to answer, surveys can be flexible and versatile or specialized and efficient – this is often why a researcher will choose to conduct a survey, because of the unique qualities that it holds (Alreck and Settle, 2004). However, even with these qualities surveys have downfalls that the author had to take into consideration. Firstly, questions on a survey may be too sensitive for the participant to answer and therefore they may leave it blank, this cause’s insufficient data to be collected. Secondly surveys can be seen as highly demanding in terms of cost, time and expertise. Lastly the questions on the survey maybe interpreted by the participants and researcher that would reduce validity of information gathered (Vaus, 2014).

3.6 Sampling

In order to conduct successful qualitative research the research must select a ‘sample’ of people who will be involved in the research project by offering thoughts, ideas and experiences. Creating a sample allows researchers to look at a few and account for the ‘many’. Further to this “samples that do a good job at conveying accurate information about the whole are referred to as representative samples” (Raune, 2005, p. 105) Representative samples are effective due to the researcher being able to extract the information gathered and then apply it to a similar demographic, this is known as sample generalizability. Researchers have a variety of sample methods to choose from including: simple random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling to name just a few.

3.7 Convenience Sampling and Purposeful Random Sampling

Out of the array of sampling methods the author has made a conclusive and informed decision to use convenience sampling in tandem with purposeful random sampling in order to gather data for her project. “The convenience sampling technique builds a sample on the basis of finding convenient or available individuals. Those who are
selected for the sample are those who are close to hand” (Raune, 2005, p. 117). Therefore the author concluded that this would be optimum methods’ to use due to the availability of interviewees and focus group participants, found in Cardiff Metropolitan University. However as Patton (1990) concluded that convenience sampling is one of the least desirable due to the ‘include whoever you can’ manner it presents which lowers validity. Therefore the author decided to specify her sample by using purposeful random sampling. This method allows one to obtain in depth information from random participants within a particular environment (Patton, 1990). So the author has combined convenience sampling and purposeful random sampling so that she has the convenience of choosing participants within Cardiff Metropolitan University. However, they have still been randomly selected in order to acquire valid data that will be useful to the authors project.

3.8 Validity

To ensure that research conducted is valid one must first understand what validity is: “validity refers to the issue of whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept” (Bryman, 2008, p. 151). There is a range of validity that a researcher may choose to measure. Face validity – does the content collected reflect the concept being explored. Predictive validity – the use of future criterion as a measure rather than current and conduct validity – manipulating the hypothesis so that it is relevant to the concept, and the list goes on (Bryman, 2008). The author has decided to check the face validity of information gathered to ensure data validity.

3.9 Ethics

“When undertaking a research project, Cardiff Met staff and students are obliged to complete this ethics form in order that the ethics implications of that project may be considered” (Cardiff Metropolitan Ethics Form, 2016). In order to conduct research safely, to protect the participants involved as well as Cardiff Metropolitan University
an ethics form has been completed. This form outlines every part of the research that one plans to conduct to decide whether the research intended will be of a discriminatory nature, will be harmful to vulnerable people and above all will follow the ethical guidelines that Cardiff Metropolitan have in place. Furthermore, research was undertaken only after the participant had read a participation form that detailed all aspects of the research conducted and with a signed consent form. Please see appendix 1 to view the documentation for the ethics procedure.

3.10 Data Collection Process

To collect the data for this research project the author used a mixed method research approach. She chose to use semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Her reasoning to do this was the strengths that each method offered and to gather good quality and rich data. The main advantage of using the semi-structured interview was that the author would gather with all the data required and the additional data that may have emerged during the interview (O'Leary, 2010). “The advantages of focus-group interviews are that this method is socially oriented, studying participants in an atmosphere more natural than artificial circumstances and more relaxed than a one-to-one interview” (Marshall and Rossman 2006, p. 114). The interviews were conducted with two current Event Management lecturers, teaching at Cardiff Metropolitan University. The interviews consisted of 19 questions, however due to the semi-structured nature the researcher may have added questions if an interesting statement or thought arose. The interviews last approximately 20-30 minutes long and have been fully transcribed (see appendix 7). The focus group consisted of 5 Event Management students currently studying at Cardiff Metropolitan University and was formulated around 6 major topic areas in which they discussed for approximately 40-50 minutes (see appendix 8).

The researcher generated the questions of both the focus group and the interviews in order to collect data that would fill gaps that the author has found within the literature. This was a vital aspect for the researcher as the information gathered was an important part of understanding as to why there are gaps in the literature. With this knowledge the author came to the conclusion that the two research methods fulfilled task requirements. The research methods made it possible that if any information was not
discussed the interviewer had the opportunity to add additional questions in order to collect the necessary or additional data that may be required.

In order to create a professional yet comfortable environment the researcher chose to hold the interviews in a familiar environment chosen within the staff section at Cardiff Metropolitan University. This room is undecorated to minimize distractions for the interviewee. In addition the room was quiet, which allowed for successful audio recording. The focus group on the other hand, was held within the researchers home. The rationale behind choosing this location was to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and relaxed. They felt free to speak about any areas that may be part of the questions they received. This choice was backed up by Marshall and Rossman (2006) after they suggested that creating a comfortable environment allows the participants to provide more truthful and in depth data. The focus group was also audio recorded and the lounge provided quietness to conduct this.

3.11 Data Analysis

In order to effectively and efficiently analyse the data that the researcher has collected the author made transcription. Audio with Transcription is a useful tool as not only will it let the author select specific data, additionally it allows her to re-listen to the interview and focus group and analysis not only the information but the tone of how it was spoken. Furthermore allowing her to pick up on pauses, or the way of something was said, enabled better consideration of the interview and focus group. Moreover it allows the author to evaluate her questions and decide whether they were beneficial or not (Phelps, Fisher and Ellis 2007). The author decided that in order to keep the interviews and focus group fresh in her mind she will transcribe them within two days of them being conducted.

After transcription was completed the author continued to use the data transcribed in an effort to fill gaps in her chosen literature. She made sure to only utilize the important data and avoid the latent data in order to provide contrasts and comparisons between current literature that she found and the new data that she has collected.
3.12 Summary

This chapter has endeavored to construct a clear rationale for the methodology used and furthermore clearly describe the methodology. Moreover the author has discussed potential methods that could have been used and delivered an argument as to why they were not. A clear description of the research methodology has been given in depth so that the study could be replicated and the sample methods have been highlighted. Reliability, validity and ethical issues have all been addressed and constraints of the research have been identified. Overall this chapter has provided the author with all details required to know about the researchers methodological approach.
4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Within this chapter an in-depth analysis of the two semi-structured interviews and the focus group that were conducted will be undertaken. Further to this, key themes will be highlighted and critiqued. Connections between the literature review will be considered in order to contribute to the already published literature. The author will provide explanations that meet the aims of the dissertation. To conclude this chapter the author
will present an event-planning model adapted from Salem et al. considering the information gathered in the literature review combined with the primary research findings. The final Smith, 2017 Event Planning model will therefore be a ‘best fit model’ suitable for events students and event managers alike.

The use of thematic analysis will be used to identify themes and patterns that have occurred in the collection of the primary research. “Thematic analysis is the study of tape-recorded conversations- either naturally conducted or in an encounter with a research interview” (Brett Davies, M. 2007, p. 31). Additionally the use of thematic analysis will aid the author in systematically analysing the qualitative data collected.

4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews – Introduction

In order to analyse the semi-structured interviews the Framework approach was utilised. This approach allowed the author to compare and contrast information from participants of an academic nature apposed to an Industry mind-set. The framework approach allows one to organise and reduce large chunks of data into manageable sizes.

Now that the data has been classified, in order to reflect opinions from industry, the author will discuss their opinions and thoughts further in order to enrich the conclusion.

4.2.1 Event Planning Models

As identified in the literature review (specifically section 2.3 – Event Planning Models) there are a variety of event planning models that could be utilised. Yeoman et al. (2013) explain that Salem et al.’s. model of event planning is a systematic framework built of four stages that will result in event development. Due to the fact that Salem et al.’s. ‘titles’ within his event planning model appear in one form or another within the vast majority of event planning models, it has been determined that using Salem et al.’s. model as a framework to develop any model is a suitable proposal.

Dowson and Bassett (2015) agree that the popularity of Salem et al.’s. model lies in it’s adaptability. This provides a good basis that can be widely used due to its simplistic design.
In addition Lecturer 1’s comment proved extremely interesting:

“When I am planning an event I don’t think of any model. Unfortunately I think, although I work in the lecturing and education industry, people try and make something that isn’t academic out of it. Which is why I very rarely use academic models in events” (Lecturer 1, 2017).

The comment made by Lecturer 1 can be seen as controversial as an academic. However due to the interviewee’s heightened involvement within the industry his comments come from experience rather than theory based practice. Furthermore it disagrees with Dowson and Bassett (2015) and Yeoman’s (2103) notions of the usefulness in which the model provides. This comment proved thought-provoking and forced the author to question whether an event-planning model would be necessary after ample industry experience has been gained.

Lecturer 2 however talks from a much purer academic and theory based knowledge and this came through in his comments:

“A model is a starting point and I think a starting point is good. I think that the four phases of decision, planning, implementation and evaluation are exactly the same in whatever event you plan. But obviously the middle parts are different depending on what type of event” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Highlighted within this statement it is clear that Lecturer 2 agrees with the theory written by Dowson and Bassett (2015) and Yeoman’s (2103). Specific agreements lie with the concept of having four stages within an event-planning model for any event. Additionally a clear divide is already emerging within the opinions of the mainly industry learnt participant and the more academic focused participant.

Arguably using event-planning models to plan an event is the decision of the event managers themselves. Bowdin (2006) for example, suggests that event planning models are best utilised in the context of planning ‘new’ events. However authors offer different opinions on how, when and why event-planning models should be used. Lecturer 1 also indicated a difference of opinion by stating:
“I think the dangerous thing in this is somebody with a limited experience and naivety to events is going to come along and go well I followed the model so I must be a good event manager. I think it is wrong to put a model together that ALL events should follow because they don’t all follow the same route” (Lecturer 1, 2017).

The respondent, in this case, has shared his own opinion on giving everyone a ‘one fits all’ event model. This statement agrees with ideas put forward by Tum et al. (2006) due to their beliefs that suggest event planning models should be of a flexible nature in order to allow for change and contingencies. Allowing for flexibility would possibly create the potential for creating a ‘perfect, one fits all’ event-planning model. This proposition will be targeted throughout the discussion in order to formulate an adapted model to close with.

4.2.2 The Decision Stage

To further investigate the ‘decision stage’ of Salem et al’s. model the author has considered all information provided within the literature section 2.4. In order to strengthen the literature and investigate whether or not it has been supported, the author asked both participants questions concerning each section of the decision stage.

Bowdin et al. (2003) suggests the importance of aims and objectives within event planning. He further explains that establishing aims and objectives creates a measurement tool on current status and desired outcome to where the event is, wants to be and is going. Referring to the literature, Bowdin et al. (2006) also states how crucial aims and objectives are and how determining them early on provides the event with a heightened level of success.

Lecturer 1 provides an agreeing statement:

“To plan you need to have an aim and objective, a beginning a middle and end” (Lecturer 1, 2017)

Lecturer 2 also agreed, however, closed with an interesting opinion on objectives:
“I think that the aim is essential, because like with your dissertation really, unless you have got a really tight aim then you don’t you know. Overall I think the objectives for an event are less important than the actual aim” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Both respondents highlighted that they also shared beliefs that establishing the aim of an event is vital. This backs up the earlier statement supported by Bowdin (2003 & 2006). Information considering the other aspects needed to run an event included: a beginning, middle and an end – this was from the opinion of Lecturer 1 (industry participant) this statement will be further analysed within the discussion.

Establishment of a management board in the opinion of Braase (2011) is the most essential part of the planning process. However, Armstrong (2011) disagrees and states that other aspects of the planning process are far more imperative. Therefore it is interesting to examine the answers of both participants whom not only agree with each other but also agree with Braase (2011):

“It depends what their knowledge is, you can have plenty of people sat on that board but if they don’t know what you are trying to achieve then there is no point” (Lecturer 1, 2017).

And

“A management board is essential but it depends on the makeup of that board” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Additionally, it is apparent in the lecturers academic and industry opinions that establishing a management board is essential with careful consideration to who participates. This leads onto the next aspect of establishing a team, which is the event manager’s use of delegation. Armstrong (2011) explains that considerations of who will be carrying out each task must be taken. This skill is known as delegation and successful event managers will more than likely possess this skill. The lecture’s views on delegation were as follows:
“That’s what makes a good event manager. Delegation is constructively and objectively one of the essential parts of being a good event manager – it is to trust the people that you have given the tasks to, to do them” (Lecturer 1, 2017)

And

“I think that it is really important, however in practice I find it really hard to delegate tasks because I have always got this feeling that nobody else is going to do it as well as I do it, now I don’t trust people to do it, and often in my own experience” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Considering both respondents views allows the author to make an informed assumption that whilst delegation is imperative, a relationship of trust amongst the team is the key to success.

Within the ‘decision stage’ of Salem et al.’s event planning model is a section focused on the piloting of a feasibility study. Dowson and Bassett (2015) suggest that a feasibility study is only necessary in larger more complex events. However they also suggest that a feasibility study gives an event of any size a greater chance of success but due to cost effectiveness elaborate the fact that it is not a necessary procedure. Lecturer 1 agrees with this statement:

“If I had the money, yes, but you often cannot the rational of why someone wants to do an event” (Lecturer 1, 2017).

This agrees with the idea put forward by Dowson and Bassett (2015). It further highlights the importance of a feasibility study but only if it is cost effective. Within this research the author has concluded that a feasibility study should be conducted if funds allow.

4.2.3 Detailed Planning Stage

When examining the ‘detailed planning stage,’ literature from section 2.5 will be considered. One aspect within the ‘detailed planning stage’ is the budget. Getz (2007) states that there is very little literature published concerning the budget. However, Balden et al. is of the opinion that the budget is linked with aims and objectives and
will therefore be focused on more in the ‘decision stage’. He goes on to explain that SMART objectives should be utilised when considering an event budget. Contemplating the fact that Getz (2007) elaborates on the lack of literature available, both lecturers are of a strong opinion that the budget is one of the most important aspects of event planning.

Lecturer 1 states:

“Budgets are crucial because it helps give structure to the event. It is essential because if you don’t have a budget you don’t get paid! If it’s public money or local authority, then I am very much about making sure people get value for money” (Lecturer 1, 2017).

With this being said the author will consider the placement of the ‘budget’ section within the adapted model. The opinions of interviewed participants and Balden et al. favour the budget playing a crucial aspect and therefore it may need to be addressed earlier within event planning models. This is additionally backed up by Lecturer 2’s comment on the budget section:

“The budget is absolutely vital! But you need to have a contingency, you need to have a realistic contingency for managing your budget” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Marketing an event correctly can be the key to a successful event. O’Toole (2011) explained that marketing should be ingenious in order to attract the market segmentation that the event is aimed at. Marketing can take many forms including the newer technique of social media marketing. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2015) suggest that digital media has revolutionised the way that marketing is carried out. Therefore, the author found Lecturer 2’s opinion extremely thought provoking due to the contrast in opinions help by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2015):

“I think that there is so much focus now-a-days on social media marketing, and I think that it may have reached saturation point. Actually you get a bit of screen fatigue and I wonder if that’s the way marketing is going” (Lecturer 2, 2017)

Venue finding has a direct link to the marketing section, as the venue needs to be compatible with the demographic of the guests. Shone and Parry (2013) share strong
opinions on the venue aspect of event planning. Not only do they consider it to be one of the most important factors they are also in agreement with Allen (2009) who adds that all requirements for venue selection must be obtained in order to find the ‘perfect’ venue. Lecturer 1 agrees with both authors:

“The venue is crucial in creating the right atmosphere” (Lecturer 1, 2017).

Interestingly Lecturer 1 links the venue to creating an “atmosphere.” Creating an atmosphere is a potential part of event planning that is relatively under-considered. Therefore the author will contemplate inputting a specific section concerning atmosphere in the end model. Lecturer 2 also provides comments that have the potential of dictating aspects that could be included within the final model such as an events unique selling point.

“I think finding a successful venue an interesting venue, a niche venue could actually be your USP” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Event scheduling can be done in a manner of ways; however, Tum et al. (2005) state that emphasis should be on the chronological order of activities and time management. Event managers will often work from a schedule with planned flexibility. Lecturer 2’s opinions of a schedule mirror those of Tum et al. (2003):

“A schedule is absolutely vital! Again allowing contingency within the schedule. Having a tight schedule it is absolutely crucial and I think again some contingency and some elasticity to allow people time” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

4.2.4 Implementation Stage

Salem et al’s. ‘implementation stage’ of his event-planning model has been criticised for being exceptionally limited. In the authors research this comes through in the lack of information received about the ‘implementation stage.’ Bowdin et al. (2003) offers several ways in which one may choose to monitor an event. However Lecturer 2 suggests that:
“In the model that’s the one part of it that there’s no way of doing this sort of during the event, it’s quite hard because you’re focusing on so many other things that need to be done” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

Lecturer 2 puts forward the idea that it is proven to be difficult to monitor progress during an event due to the heightened event managers responsibilities. Furthering this the author will consider that the ‘implementation stage’ has the potential to be expanded. For example inserting a new sub section that includes delegation of tasks during the event. Expanding on this Lecturer 1 also provides some interesting thoughts about monitoring events retrospectively:

“I think that evaluation is just naturally a retrospective thing. And it’s quite hard to evaluate something when you are in the middle of it because you may be tired” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

This proves interesting to the author as Bowdin et al.’s. (2003) research explains monitoring progress of an event allows for last minute adjustments, to improve the event. Therefore the author has made an informed decision to keep this section within the final model however, may consider slight modifications.

4.2.5 Evaluation Stage

Salem et al’s. evaluation stage seeks to examine the outcomes and processes of the event its self and all stakeholders involved. Balden et al. (2012) highlighted Getz’s (2007) list of “seven practical points for investigating management time and resources in the process of evaluation.” Using this list to evaluate an event can prove beneficial in order to evaluate the success of an event correctly. Both lectures provided thought-provoking ways in which they would chose to evaluate an event.

“You can use clinical accessing processes and tests and questionnaires and talk to them – go over to them and ask are you having a nice time? If the clients want to do it again, how much money they made, as I said early about being in the crowd and listening to the crowd, and just talking and hearing how the clients felt.” (Lecturer 1, 2017).
And

“I think of the measurement of the success of an event is talking to the punters themselves. There are other factors as well not just that, so I mean repeat trade is often one measure of an indication isn’t it? But it’s not the be end and end all” (Lecturer 2, 2017).

The evidence provided suggest that within industry and within theory based knowledge, both utilise the same techniques when evaluating an event. Additionally it supports theory from two well-known event authors: Balden et al. (2012) and Getz (2007). (Ergo a consensus of agreement is provided within this section.)

4.3 Focus Groups – Introduction

The way in which the research was conducted allowed the author to group the data into sections with ease. By splitting the data and therefore focusing on the focus groups data, this ensured greater analysis between the literature and new data collated. Several themes emerged from the analysis of the focus groups. The 3 main themes being; Event Success, Effectiveness of Salem et al’s Model and Getz and Tum et al’s. Event Planning Model’s. Now that these themes have been identified the author will discuss these topics further in order to inform the conclusion. Identifying themes assist in the grouping and identifying links within the data.

4.3.1 Event Success

As identified in the literature review all authors do not concur that event success comes from the same aspect of event planning. Sharples et al. (2014) and Gerritsen and Van Olderen (2011) agree that in order to create a successful event one must consider the guest ‘experience’ as the most important feature. On the other hand Berridge (2007) suggests that event success stems from a successful event plan. Shone and Parry (2003) consider atmosphere and ambience to be one of the most important factors in event success, this agrees with an earlier statement provided by Lecturer 1 concerning the venue. Due to the wide range of opinions, the author has concluded that events can be deemed successful if all of these aspects are taken into consideration. Ergo event
managers use methods of evaluation in order to focus on criteria that contribute event success and then utilise these criteria within repeat events. Evaluation allows event managers to consider more than one aspect when creating an event in order to not limit event success. The author’s decision to consider more than one aspect was only strengthened when each of the focus group participants offered up contrasting aspects to what they consider is the key to event success.

“An event that is actually interesting that kind of quite new” (Participant 5, 2017).

Participant 5’s opinion on what creates event success is similar to that of Shone and Parry (2003). The respondent explains that an interesting and new event is what they consider key. This links into ensuring that atmosphere and ambience is taken into consideration and also links to data gathered within the interviews. Other participant’s thoughts on event success also prove interesting:

“A lot of pre-planning and team collaboration” (Participant 3, 2017)

“The event has to make a profit really for it to be a success, that’s quite vital, but then alongside that things like sustainability and CSR are a big part to play, so like social, environmental, economics all have parts to play” (Participant 2, 2017)

“A good strategic plan is important for if you are putting on an event to have aims and objectives. We could look at secondary research so look at different sorts of data to collect research but it is mostly going to have to be primary resourcing and getting that primary research in because you want to come face to face with your consumer and find out what each individual or focus group wants to then put that into practice” (Participant 4, 2017).

Participant 4 provides extremely dynamic opinion that will be considered further. Consumer research stands to be an important factor within event planning in order to meet client’s needs and requests. Ergo heightening likely hood of event success.

Participant 1 provided a statement that supported the theory of Braase (2011). Braase (2011) stated that identifying an event project manager is the most important part of event planning. The respondent’s views mirror those of Braase (2011):
“A great management team, you need the people from the get go to know what they are doing and to delegate tasks and get the job done” (Participant 1, 2017).

These results display a difference of opinions as to the criteria to state that an event was successful. However it has enabled the author to appreciate that event success does not stem from one factor, but instead a variety of interdependent criteria.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of Salem et al’s. Model

In order for the author to generate an adapted event-planning model from Salem et al’s. model she must evaluate its effectiveness. Thus primary research has been conducted in conjunction with analysing already published literature to ensure that the new model incorporates all aspects needed to organise a successful event.

Initially the focus group examined the decision stage of the model. This stage concludes with the final decision of what the event is essentially going to be. Harris (2007) explains that this section is important as it gives the event manager the knowledge to plan the rest of the event. However participant 1 provides a debatable statement:

“I think the ‘final decision’ section should go because yes you are going to stick to your aims and objectives but the decision you come up with may not be the one that is used so maybe that could come in at a different part of the model” (Participant 1, 2017).

The contrast of opinions between Harris (2007) and participant 1 provide the author with thought-provoking consideration of where the final decision should be placed within the adapted model. The author will consequently analyse where to place this section. Participant 3 provides a summarising statement on their opinions of the importance of the ‘decision stage’ as a whole:

“The first section is crucial because as it has already identified the aims and objectives, the management board the feasibility and what is the point of the event do we have a precise aim? All of these parts are really crucial” (Participant 3, 2017).

The focus group made limited comments on the first stage as they considered it strong. Furthermore they concluded that apart from their suggestions for improving this stage, it fulfilled the requirements of what is needed within a first stage of event planning.
When exploring the sections of the ‘detailed planning stage’ participants of the focus group felt very strongly that the financial study had been positioned incorrectly. The comments made on this section are reflected in the literature. Getz (2007) states that there has been minimal research around finance in event planning. Therefore it does not come as a surprise to the author that participants disagreed with its placement. Participant 4 suggests:

“I would suggest moving finance and budgeting into its own section because obviously your budgeting is going to be one of your aims. The financial study could actually be an aim an objective in itself “ (Participant 4, 2017).

Comments on the ‘detailed planning stage’ were very focused on the financial study. This backed up the literature perfectly as all other sections are well justified. O’Toole (2011) explains that marketing is vital within this section in order to inform and attract the right target audience. Shone and Parry (2013) and Allen (2009) both agree that venue planning and operations are a vital aspect, so lack of comments on this section does not come as a surprise to the author. The semi-structured interviewees comments also mirrored the importance of the venue. As analysed above Sharples et al (2014) and Gerritsen and Van Olderen (2011) state that event design is crucial for a successful event and this aspect is mainly reflected within the venue. Tum, Norton and Wright (2005) explain the importance of event scheduling and Van Der Wagen and White (2014) illuminate the importance of human resource management within event planning. As all these aspects are appropriately backed up with literature the author will leave these sections within the adapted model.

The implementation stage has been criticised for being limited and lacking detail. With reference to the literature review Dowson and Bassett (2015) have created an event-planning model with no implementation stage. This opens the event up to potential failure as without factors such as ‘monitoring progress’ Bowdin et al. (2003) suggests that there would not be leeway for adjustments to the event. Participant 4 identifies:

“Monitoring progress is probably just going to have to be all the way throughout rather than just winging it on the day. Because even when you are
writing your aims and objectives you should be relating back and monitoring the progress” (Participant 4, 2017)

Participant 4 provides an interesting argument that progress should be monitored throughout an event. This goes against what Salem et al. has encompassed within his model.

Participant 2 provides comments that agree with the fact that this stage appears limited:

“I think maybe in this section you need to include things like setting up of the event because it’s missing out the build-up of it” (Participant 2, 2017).

Finally discussing the ‘evaluation stage’ most participants shared the views of Ferdinand and Kitchin (2012) who explain that evaluating an event assists to determine event success or failure. Views agreeing with the literature, presented by the participants proved useful to the author. Not only do these opinions affect the new model they also solidify why Salem et al. chose to create his model as he did. Participant 1 explains that:

“It does take into account all of the stakeholders on the events and how you can then individually talk about how they are effected by the event. Then you could bring that back to what I said earlier about sustainability and legacy and like how it has affected all the individual stakeholders” (Participant 1, 2017).

One aspect that could be considered as missing from Salem et al’s. model is how an event planner would evaluate success. Balden et al. (2012) provide an in depth list of why one should evaluate and further more how to evaluate an event. However Salem et al’s. model of event planning does not encompass how one would evaluate an event.

“Yes, maybe another section, one with who you will talk too and another one with your aims and objectives in it and then how you would evaluate it, that may be more practical” (Participant 2, 2017)

Participant 2 suggest a more practical approach such as having 3 sections within the ‘evaluation stage’:

1. How will you evaluate an event?
2. Who will you talk to in order to evaluate the event?
3. Have you achieved your aims and objectives?
Overall the participants shared their opinions on whether or not they thought that Salem et al’s. event planning model was a respectable model to utilise:

*Yes, but I would definitely adapt it (Participant 5, 2017).*

*I think the fact that the model is still being used in today’s universities proves that it is still relevant, to some degree. So it can’t be doing badly as it is being implemented into events. Yeah I would use it, definitely (Participant 1, 2017).*

### 4.3.3 Getz and Tum et al’s. Event Planning Model for Comparison

In order to justify adapting Salem et al’s. model the author has collected data concerning the effectiveness of other models. Models that have been examined within the literature review are Getz (2007) and Tum et al. (2005). Getz model of event planning has been critiqued for being too complicated which results in it being misused. Tum et al’s. model of events operation management has been criticised due to lack of pure event management literature used to conduct it. These critiques helped the author to choose the best model to adapt which was decided as Salem et al’s. model.

The author was able to ask participants of the focus groups direct questions about what they thought of Getz (2007) and Tum et al (2005) models. The views of participants only strengthen the author’s opinions not to use these models. As the author has explained the model that will eventually be created should be a ‘best fit model’ suitable for both event students and event managers alike. Comments shared by Participant 4 excellently summarised their thoughts on the other two models in question:

*They look quite complicated and daunting. The look too busy and not bold enough. The first one you showed us was very bold and to the point especially if you were putting on an event next week we don’t want to be studying detailed paragraphs like in Tums we want something that is just going to say clearly what is needed. As an events management student I am quite practical and quite visual rather than quite theory based (Participant 4, 2017).*

Analysing this comment of an Event Management student enabled the author to understand why this model may not be attractive to Event Management students. Additionally this comment included helpful statements as how not to create a model e.g. keep it simplistic, no long paragraphs etc.
Participant 3 praised Salem et al’s. model for being easy to understand and reasonably simplistic:

>You’d want everyone in the group to be able to understand and apply quite easily and with Salem et al’s. you can. I think with Salem as well you could use his as a base and then make it your own (Participant 3, 2017)

Overall the research of literature and primary research has informed the author that using Getz (2007) and Tum et al. (2005) models to create a ‘best fit model’ suitable for events students and event managers alike would be the wrong decision as examined above.

4.4 The Final Model

With all considerations made within the Results and Discussion chapter the author has produced Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017. The final model has accounted for all aspects discussed above and includes information taken from the literature review. Overall an in-depth event-planning model that could be used in real life context has been generated (see Figure 4.1).
Figure 4.1: Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017

4.5 Summary

This chapter has presented relevant data that can be considered applicable to the aims and objectives. Primary research has been analysed appropriately and findings have been presented clearly to the reader. Within this chapter key themes have been identified and issues have been discussed. Furthermore the data has been compared and contrasted with the literature in order to produce the best results. Additionally findings have been discussed and evaluated efficiently in order to come up with Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017.
5. Conclusion
5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains evidence of the author’s key findings. Additionally recommendations for future research will be examined which in turn will highlight suggestions for any other stakeholders who wish to research the topic. Finally the aims and objectives will be reviewed to apprehend whether they have been fulfilled and limitations of research will be discussed.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The research conducted highlighted valuable information of which the author incorporated into Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017. The author has come up with the following key findings. These findings will be presented in the order that they have been discussed within section 4; the order does not reflect the importance of each finding.

- The final decision found in Salem et al’s. model within the ‘decision stage’ has been divided into a two part concept. This has been justified in section 4.2.2. This choice creates a strengthened final decision that incorporates more aspects of the final event (the Decision Stage, the Finance Stage and the Detailed Planning Stage).
- Information gathered from the literature and the primary research conducted made it clear to the author that finance within Salem et al’s. model had been significantly overlooked. With all the information gathered agreeing, it was decided that a ‘Finance Stage’ would be beneficial to an adapted model. This will allow users of Smith’s Event Planning model to focus and better understand financing of events.
- It has been found that ambiance and atmosphere are highly significant when planning a successful event (see section 2.2). Therefore the author came to the decision to add ambiance and atmosphere in order to amplify chances of event success.
- Event Management is an increasing industry with a growing amount of academic qualifications available within the subject. A vital part of being a successful event manager is delegation of roles. Due to the ‘Implementation Stage’ being so weak
the author concluded that adding a sub-heading of delegating roles would help alleviate tasks from the manager to ensure jobs are completed effectively and efficiently.

- Set up is vital to successful event running, due to agreeing research it was imperative that set up was considered within the Smith Event Planning Model.
- Evaluating an event is a crucial part of determining improvements for repeat events or determining any issues. The author decided to split the adapted ‘Evaluation Stage’ into three stages in order to create a more systematic framework for the user.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

On reflection the author provides some minor recommendations considering the research conducted that she would consider if researching around the topic again.

- Quantity of participants – Although the author was able to gather extremely in-depth information due to her selection of participants, she would suggest a larger participant base. This would strengthen any conclusions that the author has come to by having more support.
- Analysing Models – The author was able to successfully examine and analyse 3 models, however during the research the author uncovered many more event planning models. In retrospect the author would suggest attempting to identify all published models in order to make an informed decision.
- Questions - Within the primary research the author conducted both semi-structured interviews and a focus group. On deliberation the author would have linked the questions in both the interviews and focus group so that they better complimented each other.
- Specific Research – The author has considered the topic to be large. Therefore, the author suggests that researching one stage of an event planning model could have provided sufficient information to write an in depth dissertation rather than analysing the model as a whole.
5.4 Recommendations for Event Managers

As the aim highlights the author has created a ‘best fit’ model that can be utilized by event students and event managers alike. Adapting Salem et al’s. model of event planning allowed for the creation of Smith’s Event Planning Model. The author provides recommendations for future improvements:

- Not one event-planning model is suitable for all events. One must not limit themself to the use of one model. This outlines the reason as to why the author has attempted to create a ‘best fit’ model that would allow the user to use it as a framework for a variety of events.
- Finance has been proven to be an imperative part of event planning. However, it lacks published research – this does not lesser its importance. Event managers should take time and consideration when examining and events budget as it is considered the backbone of an event.
- Event success is not just one factor. Event success can stem from many factors all of which combined aids the event. Event managers should consider all factors found within Smith’s Event Planning model in order to create a holistic event.

5.5 Aims and Objectives Re-visited

In order to achieve the aim of this dissertation:

*To use published literature and primary research to create an adapted version of Salem et al’s. event planning model to develop a ‘best fit model’ suitable for events students and event managers alike.*

The following objectives were fulfilled:

*To critically analyse event-planning models in order to identify the most practical model to adapt for events students and event managers alike*

Reviewing a variety of academic fulfilled the objective, literature topics such as: event management, event planning, project management and events in general were examined. This objective, in some cases, proved difficult to achieve due to lacking literature focused on the success and implementation of event planning models. In addition this left the author having to consider opinions of the authors that created the models rather than those of supplementary authors.
To evaluate and conduct a critical literature review around event planning, using appropriate academic resources

In order to fulfil the above objective large amounts of literature has to be reviewed. The author did not limit herself to books; instead she expanded the horizon to look at articles, journals, online academic sources and new information gathered during primary research.

To examine the extent of information gathered from an academic lecture, an industry lecturer and Event Management students from Cardiff Metropolitan University in order to create an adapted event-planning model

Conducting two detailed semi-structured interviews and one focus group of five participants fulfilled this objective. The data gathering was them thematically analysed which allowed for detailed conclusions to be drawn.

Evaluate the primary research collected in order to create Smith’s model of event planning, 2017 using information gathered in order to ensure the models success

All information gathered including new data and published data was analysed in order to create a model that would assist event success. Without examining the information the new framework could not conclusively be considered as effective.

To further develop theory into event planning models in order to create a conclusive end model

This was fulfilled by the detailed analysis conducted by the author. She was able to determine whether research supported or disagreed with her final conclusions. Referring back to section 5.3 and 5.4 the author was also able to generate future recommendations for research and event managers.

5.6 Limitations of Research

Limitations to the author’s research occurred through a variety of different channels, firstly:

- The author has considered a bias opinion to be a limitation. When creating a new model it is beneficial to obtain an array of information from different participants. However the participants that participated in the author research were all of similar
background. Both interview participants teach event management at Cardiff Metropolitan University and all focus group participants take Events Management at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

- When conducting a focus group there is a chance that participants will stray off topic. This can sometimes leave the author with irrelevant information that clouds the aim of the research. Straying off topic can cause issues if the author does not redirect the conversation swiftly.

- The authors amount of participants can be considered as low. This could be considered as a limitation as it could effect the amount of information gathered that the author could use to compare and contrast. This could also lead to the authors adapted model not being of high validity.

5.5 Summary

Considering the original aim the author has been able to create an effective adaption of Salem et al.’s model of event planning. Understanding all the literature and primary research gathered has aided her to create the new framework that can be used as a model of best fit when planning events for event managers and event students. The author has concluded that the Smith Model, 2017 showcases all the factors needed to create and run a successful event. Moreover considerations have been taken to ensure that the main factors of event success, including: ambiance, atmosphere, experience and logistics, planning and management have all been injected into the model. Evaluating what makes an event successful and including these reasons within the adapted model help to ensure the effectiveness of it.

In conclusion the author is happy to present Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017 as a working event planning model. The author hopes that this model will be utilised by event planners and further aid them in creating successful events and act as an effective guideline of which all can follow with ease.
Figure 5.1: Smith’s Event Planning Model, 2017