How authenticity in events fosters social sustainability: Towards an authenticity ecosystem and implications for destination management

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A B S T R A C T

This study systematically and critically synthesises how the notion of authenticity has been addressed in the extant events literature to foster social sustainability in host destinations. Studies between 1996 and 2020 were systematically collected and analysed, revealing an observable emphasis on how authentic events can drive and improve social sustainability in destinations. By adopting a systems thinking approach, this study subsequently developed a holistic multi-actor network, so-called *authenticity ecosystem*. In this *authenticity ecosystem*, authenticity in events is posited as a vehicle permeating host destinations to drive social sustainability. Following this, four significant research directions were proposed to advance the authenticity scholarship in events and destination management, thus providing strategic agendas for the future of event and destination management research. This study therefore contributes to the understanding of how destination managers can better use authenticity in events to enhance social sustainability in host destinations.

1. Introduction

Early papers about events which appeared in the tourism literature generally focussed on the management of events and all its component parts such as logistics, marketing, sponsorship and so on. Other popular streams for investigation dealt with event legacies for the host community (Smith, 2014), such as impact assessments which focussed primarily on economic matters, but eventually branched out to include social and environmental impacts, and more holistic assessments such as triple bottom line evaluations (Preuss, 2019). The art of designing events (Dowson, Dickson, & Bell, 2022) brought different aspects of producing events into consideration and advances in technology, and in particular, virtual applications became increasingly studied (Le & Yung, 2022), especially in the wake of the global pandemic (Yung, Le, Moyle, & Arcodia, 2022). Events have been an important element of the destination marketing mix, but as sustainability becomes increasingly important, it is imperative for event management to increasingly focus on the close relationship with sustainable tourism destination development (Kim & Kim, 2020). This has resulted in several discussions around the interrelationships between event management, destination management, and sustainable tourism.

These studies increased in sophistication, leading to a growth in depth and width of the discussions, about the interrelationships between events, tourism, hospitality, and sport management (Arcodia, Abreu Novais and Le, 2020). Getz (2012) first suggested that the field of event management would advance further if studies of events were more conceptual in nature and explored more fully applicable underpinning theories. As scholarship in the field progressed, studies were increasingly focussed on the critical understanding of events and their interrelationship with society. This evolution has also accommodated what has become known as event studies, which has broadened the field and focuses more on the critical analysis of event management and brings into the debates, perspectives from different disciplines (Getz & Page, 2016; Ong & Goh, 2018). Critical discourses within event studies increasingly involve events and their impact on societies, notably commodification of events (Lin & Bestor, 2020; Syafrini, Fadhil Nurdin, Sugandi, & Miko, 2020), and development of events to promote the preservation and/or revitalisation of social and cultural heritage (Clark & Rice, 2019; Pezzi, 2017). Such discourses often revolve around the notion of authenticity; in particular, how addressing this is vital for a stronger sustainable position in the destination. Authenticity is

increasingly used to counter unbridled tourism development and enhance social sustainability of the host community, in the pathway to achieve more wholesome destination management (Kim & Kim, 2020; Lee, Jan, & Lin, 2021).

Deliberations about the meaning and usefulness of authenticity have been evident in the broad social sciences literature for decades since MacCannell's (1973) staged authenticity, followed by Wang's (1999) typology of authenticity (i.e., objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity) (Le, Arcodia, Kralj and Abreu Novais, 2018; Zhou, He, & Li, 2022). In the tourism specific literature, Wang's typology is considered seminal as it elucidates understandings of authenticity in a straightforward and accessible manner (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; Le, Arcodia, Abreu Novais, & Kralj, 2019), which then opened a floodgate of research, followed by more recent developments into different dimensions of existentialism (Rickly, 2022). In addition, there has been an emerging research trend towards postmodernism in the rise of globalisation (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Roudometof, 2021), which increasingly serves as a medium to preserve social and cultural heritage (Gardiner, Vada, Yang, Khoo, & Le, 2022; Xu, Le, Kwek, & Wang, 2022). The hot/cool authentication framework developed by Cohen and Cohen (2012) has also played a crucial role in recognising the social processes that drive authentication and how authenticity discourses can underpin responsible, ethical and sustainable tourism behaviour, thus contributing to social well-being (for a broader review of authenticity in tourism research, refer to Le et al., 2019; Rickly, 2022; Zhou, He, & Li, 2022).

The literature on events has likewise hosted several considerations about authenticity, albeit to a lesser degree. Participants at events are increasingly seeking, as are tourists in general, unique and distinctive experiences at destinations (Prayag, Le, Pourfakhimi, & Nadim, 2022) which expose them to human difference which can be exciting, fulfilling, and challenging. Events which are authentic, or at least provide consumers with some event activities which are deemed to be authentic, can be transformative and contribute to more sustainably managed destinations (Brooks & Soulard, 2022; Wong, Ma, & Xiong, 2020). Offering authentic events can help achieve a competitive advantage over those which appear to be commercialised, commodified, and unresponsive to the authentic indicators which participants increasingly seek at a destination, thus enhancing their memorable experiences and revisit intentions (Rickly, 2022). Moreover, addressing issues of commodification and commercialisation can help nurture more authentic offerings which become significant components of a destination's management (Lin & Bestor, 2020; Syafrini et al., 2020).

It is therefore necessary to view authenticity not just as a tool for tourism marketing, but for sustainable tourism management as well. While it is somewhat evident that authenticity has an inherent tie to social sustainability, the role of authenticity in alleviating events' social impacts and enhancing the host destination's social sustainability has not been well documented, leading to a lack of consensus on to what extent authenticity in events can be used as a driver for social sustainability of host destinations. This study hereby identifies, analyses and synthesises how the notion of authenticity has been addressed in the extant events literature and explores specifically how destination management can become more sustainable when a stronger focus is placed on the authenticity of events. Following this, two research objectives (ROs) have been developed to address the overarching aim of the synthesis:

RO1: To uncover to what extent different stakeholders have been integrated in the study of authenticity in events to enhance the social sustainability of host destinations.

RO2: To determine to what extent authenticity has been conceptualised and utilised in different types of events to enhance the social sustainability of host destinations.

Such a synthesis has not been conducted previously, and this is not simply a broad review of the current literature on authenticity and events, but a systematic assessment of the studies which deal with authenticity and events, and approaches which can be documented, explored and developed further, to manage and promote sustainability in those tourism destination communities where events are part of the destination mix. If events are offered more authentically, they can become robust drivers of sustainable destinations, delivering at once, meaningful celebrations for locals, and an educative sharing of social and cultural heritage for visitors. Such critical considerations emerging from the synthesis will then be illustrated using a systems thinking approach, resulting in a development of a holistic multi-actor network in which authenticity can be used to provide strategic agendas for the future of event and destination management research.

2. Research background

2.1. Events and the discourse of authenticity

Concerned with a destination's tradition and culture in shaping tourists' experiences, authenticity denotes origins, genuineness, and truth (Brida, Disegna, & Osti, 2013; Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Four main types of authenticity have been conceptualised, including objective, constructive, existential, and postmodern (Le, 2022a). Objective authenticity upholds the objective measurable originality enacted by local people and authoritative certifications (Bruner, 1994), while constructive authenticity relies on tourists' interpretations, past experiences, and perceptions of toured objects, and is socially constructed (Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity stands by tourists' personal interpretations, but emphasises the experiences of individual and collective selves, hence dilutes the importance of toured objects. Lastly, postmodern authenticity rejects the relevance of authenticity for hyperreal tourism experiences (Novello & Fernandez, 2016), which remains controversial since authenticity is pertinent to certain tourists (Le et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022). Nevertheless, as postmodern authenticity is perceived through emotional experiences (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Prayag et al., 2022), it is relevant for experience-seeking hedonists (Jensen & Lindberg, 2001). This makes the concept important in the event context, as hedonism is among the attendance motives (Gardiner et al., 2022; Getz & Page, 2016; Xu et al., 2022).

The existing body of authenticity literature in events has shown a prevalent focus on authenticity as part of event goers' experience and a crucial determinant for tourists' motivation, satisfaction, and retention (Abreu Novais, Arcodia, Berchtenbreiter, Humpe, & Le, 2020; Akhoondnejad, 2016; Brida et al., 2013; Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003; Shen, 2014). Associated with the existential view of authenticity that is based on enjoyment and experience of uniqueness, Xie (2004) claimed that authenticity was inherent in visitors' mind and their attending motives and expectations, rather than their experiences with the toured heritage sites. Similarly, Novello and Fernandez (2016) examined existential authenticity, suggesting that perceived authenticity may arise from tourists' lack of past experiences with the toured culture and similar events. Nowacki (2016) and Osti, Disegna, and Brida (2010) claimed that higher perceived existential authenticity led to greater event loyalty while Zhang, Wen, and Li (2019) challenged this view, highlighting object-related authenticity had greater impacts on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty than existential authenticity. Gardiner et al. (2022), in investigating a staged European medieval event in Australia, found that event goers to this event were willing to accept staged authenticity as a form of heritage experience, therefore the historical era presented did not need to have any real historical connection to the local culture or place, and as such, staged authenticity still induced a positive attitude towards such a recreated event experience.

As such, within the event context, there has been growing scholarship into the existential aspects of authenticity (Rickly, 2022), in conjunction with an emerging trend towards postmodernism due to globalisation (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Roudometof, 2021), which signifies authenticity as an increasingly important medium to preserve

social and cultural heritage (Gardiner et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022), henceforth enhancing social sustainability. Notwithstanding the ongoing relevance of tourist experience in authenticity research in events, there has been some evidence suggesting authenticity as a driver for social sustainability, that is, using authentic events or managing authenticity issues in events can strengthen social sustainability of destinations. The following section explains the relationship between authenticity and social sustainability in events.

2.2. Authenticity in events as a driver for social sustainability

Concerns with regards to event impacts on local communities, cultural heritage and thus social sustainability are not new to the scholarship in events. In fact, the concern for social impacts in events has long been inherent in the authenticity scholarship since MacCannell (1973) introduced the concept of "staged authenticity" in response to the abundance of visitors seeking authentic experiences of 'the Other'. The emergence of tourism was indicated to deteriorate authenticity of 'the local Other' and their everyday lives, by turning local and cultural elements into goods and services (i.e., tourism and/or events as a commodity). Local communities thus turned to producing "staged authenticity" (MacCannell, 1973) as a way to minimise tourism disruption to their way of life. Nevertheless, given that culture is fluid and ever evolving, the notion of authenticity is also positioned in a constantly changing system rather than a static setting of objects and ideas (Cohen, 1999), whereby cultural commodification becomes more fluid as per the ever-evolving boundary of authenticity (Meethan, 2001). Cultural events, as one way for local communities to celebrate and preserve cultural and social heritage, are also subject to the commodification process. On a positive note, however, commodification is not an immediate concern for local communities, as some cultural events still create a sense of local pride, kinship, community, and social integration (MacLeod, 2006; Richards, 2007), thus fostering social sustainability for the host destination.

Indeed, events play a critical role in fostering the sustainable development of the local culture and community via the authentic representation of local culture and traditions (Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). Specifically, they generate economic benefits and support local businesses by using local produce, delicacies, and merchandise (Choi, Imon, & Couto, 2020; Davies, Cretella, Edwards, & Marovelli, 2022), strengthen the local community, effectively deliver the host destination's image, promote cultural traditions, raise cultural awareness, stimulate interventions for development and regeneration, and encourage environmental improvement (Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). However, to sustain cultural events and their benefits, events are encouraged to stand by the authentic portrayal of local culture, as undesirable commodification affects perceived event quality and retention (Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). Delivering authentic cultural events also enables cultural elements to be transferred from the local context into the multicultural public space, hence activating cultural sharing (MacLeod, 2006).

On the other hand, events can also create negative impacts on the social sustainability of the host destination, by triggering cultural-economic conflict, whereby economic development and international recognition lead to cultural compromise (Green, 2007). Given that authenticity has been increasingly challenged by globalisation and cultural homogenization, social sustainability aspects of events and the host communities are also at risk of deterioration. Hinch and de la Barre (2007) asserted that globalisation's impacts can be minimised by tying sporting events to their unique locations, adopting cultural exhibitions to celebrate local cultures, incorporating both contemporary and traditional sports, hence safeguarding events' competitive advantage and sustainability. The production of events commonly involves multiple perspectives, which is to facilitate the negotiation of staged authenticity, can also help minimise the impacts of commodification (Skandalis, Byrom, & Banister, 2019; Zhou, He, & Li, 2022). This is indeed relevant

given that event commercial ventures can take away the control power of the locals regarding traditional practices at the event and cause conflict of identity (Henry, 2000). As a result, while it is somewhat evident that authenticity has an inherent tie to social sustainability, the role of authenticity in alleviating events' social impacts and enhancing the host destination's social sustainability has not been well documented, leading to a lack of consensus on to what extent authenticity in events can be used as a driver for social sustainability of host destinations. This study, therefore, synthesises the role of authenticity in events in fostering socially sustainable destination management portrayed by the existing body of literature and proposes a way forward. The next section explains the methodology used for the review.

3. Methodology

A systematic literature review was carried out to collate, analyse and integrate the existing studies on authenticity in the context of events. This review process employed a five-step process (for similar recent systematic reviews, please see Carvalho & Alves, 2022; Lee, Ng, & Wut, 2022; Le et al., 2019) which is combined and adapted from the five-step framework proposed by Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen, and Antes (2003) and the fifteen-stage method developed by Pickering and Byrne (2014) for conducting systematic literature review. This five-step process consists of (1) defining and framing key review questions; (2) identifying relevant search terms, databases and outlining selection criteria; (3) searching databases, assessing searched records against the selection criteria, and finalising eligible searched records; (4) obtaining relevant types of coding from finalised searched records and tabulating the coding; and (5) collating, presenting key findings and interpreting them.

3.1. Search strategy and selection criteria

To ensure the comprehensiveness of the systematic literature review, it is a common practice to search for publications using multiple databases. The databases used in this systematic process included Google Scholar, Scopus, EBSCO Host, Science Direct, Emerald, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Sage (see Esfandiar, Pearce, Dowling, & Goh, 2022 and Le et al., 2019 for the similar database inclusions). The selection criteria comprised of publications written in English, published in peer-reviewed academic books, journals, and conference proceedings, and appeared online as of January 2021 (to ensure any late December 2020 publications were also included). This current review included peer-reviewed journal articles, refereed conference papers, and book chapters as eligible records (e.g., Li, Zhang, & Hsu, 2023) because thorough and scholarly discussions on authenticity in events were also found in these other published sources. Indeed, some scholarly conference papers are never developed further into published academic papers (e.g., Guerreiro, Do Valle, & Mendes, 2009; Intason, Coetzee, & Lee, 2019; Robinson, 2009), while some useful discussions on authenticity in events were made in referred book chapters (e.g., Hinch & de la Barre, 2007; MacLeod, 2006; Thompson & Matheson, 2008). Nevertheless, those that are superseded with published papers are removed from the review to avoid duplication. Multiple search terms were used to gather records on authenticity in events. Authenticity-related concepts emerging from the theoretical background of authenticity such as "authenticity", "authentication", "otherness", "othering", and "othered" (which were used in the systematic literature review in authenticity conducted by Le et al., 2019) in conjunction to the event-related terms such as "event", "festival", "fair", "market", "conference", and "convention" were searched in the title, abstract, and keywords in the databases.

Moher et al.'s (2010) PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flowchart was adapted with some adjustments to facilitate the efficiency of the searching process (see Fig. 1). The combination of the searched terms was firstly deployed in Google Scholar, subsequently repeated in the other seven databases.
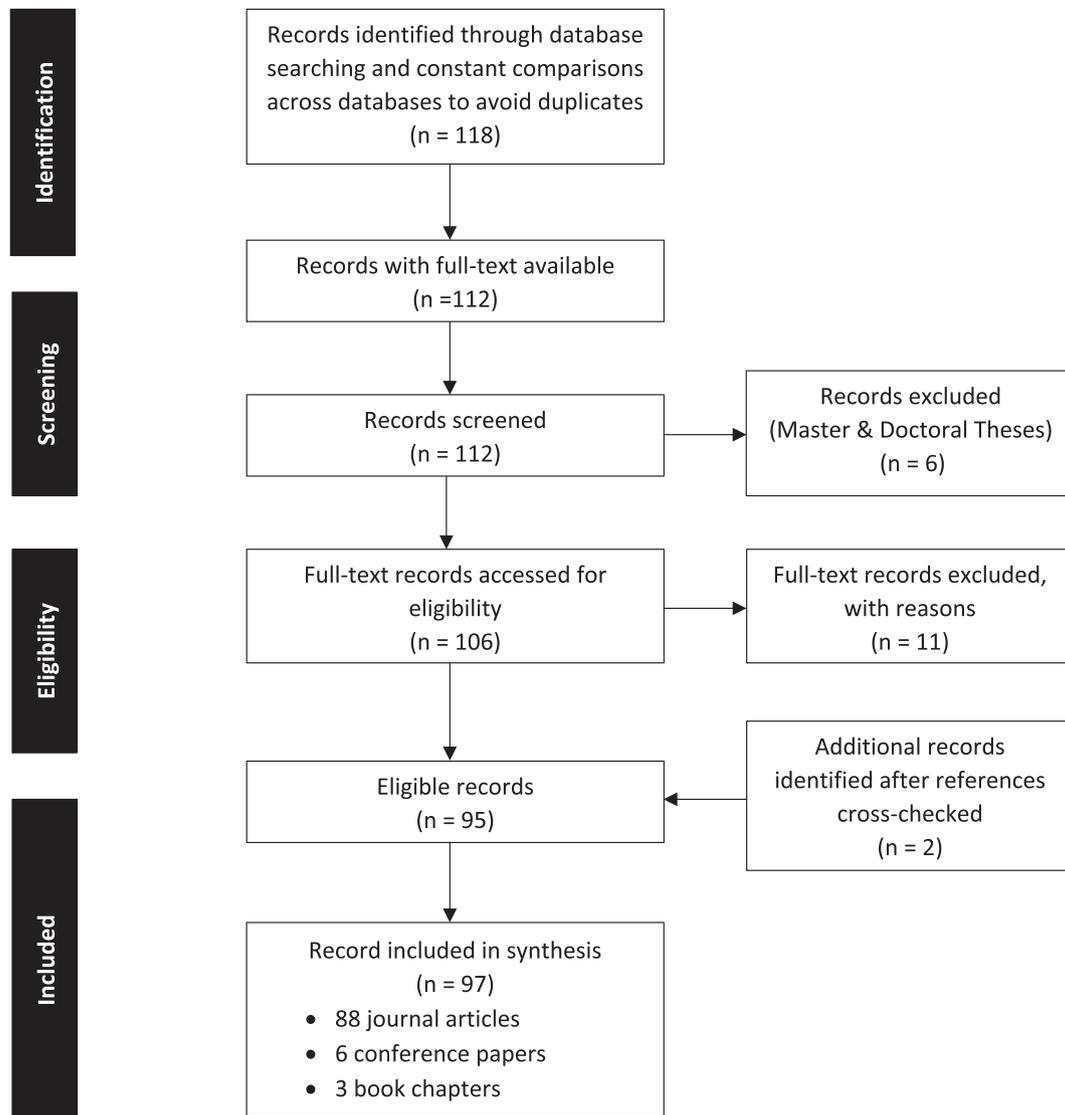
Fig. 1. A PRISMA Flowchart (adapted from Le et al., 2019).

Records derived from these eight databases were constantly compared to avoid duplicates. The search in the additional seven databases was to ensure no records were missed during the search in Google Scholar (Le et al., 2019).

3.2. Sample

As of January 2021, there were 118 records initially identified through the searches and constant comparisons across databases. 112 full-text records were evaluated in the screening phase, which resulted in the exclusion of 6 Masters and Doctoral dissertations. Following the screening process, there were 106 eligible full-text records included in the close-up examination. After a close-up assessment of the full-text records, a further 11 records were excluded. These 11 records were discarded because authenticity is considered a peripheral phenomenon of interest in the event space, or not really studied in an event context, or briefly mentioned in the future research considerations. For example, authenticity was briefly mentioned in Feo (2020) as one of common indicators for destination positioning, and not directly associated to any event-related investigations. In another instance, authenticity was examined in relation to historic districts in China (e.g., Lin, 2017; Lu, Chi, & Liu, 2015), in which staged experiences were loosely considered "events", which in turn misrepresents the focus on authenticity in an

event context. Any similar instances therefore were excluded from the synthesis. Subsequently, further two records were identified in the reference list cross-checking process. As a result, there were 97 eligible records to be included in the synthesis, which consists of 88 journal articles, 6 conference papers, and 3 books chapters. The list of the 97 eligible records is documented in Appendix.

3.3. Analytical strategy

The full texts retrieved from the 97 records were analysed using a two-phased approach. Firstly, the 97 records were quantitatively assessed, coded and tabulated into an excel spreadsheet to sketch a comprehensive landscape of authenticity in events. It is important to note that the coding and categorisation (the review process) conducted were dependent on the researchers' linguistic background and subjective interpretations. Secondly, thematic analysis was subsequently conducted by reading the full texts to identify key concepts investigated in conjunction with authenticity in events, which was then mapped using a systems thinking approach. The systems thinking approach is defined as "a holistic approach to evaluate and analyse the interrelation of a system's integral parts" in order to connect its components and improve the overall productivity/wellbeing of the system (Jaaron, Pham, & Cogonon, 2023, p. 1034). Following this, we used the Kumo

tool (www.kumu.io), which is online software that facilitates a systems thinking approach, to map the interrelationships between key concepts investigated in authenticity in events. Given that systems thinking has been widely used in tourism management research at the macro-level (e. g., destination, community, economy) (Glyptou, 2022; Jaaron et al., 2023), this approach is well suited to the purpose of this review, that is, to examine the role of authenticity in events in fostering sustainable destination management. The key outcome of this thematic analysis is a network of key concepts examined in authenticity literature in events, which is crucial to establishing a multi-actor framework underpinning authenticity research and applications in events.

To lessen such subjectivity and ensure consistency in the review process, all members of the research team, which consists of one Asian and four English native speaking researchers, conducted the coding and categorisation among the first 10% of articles (10 articles). The categories identified in this step were then cross-checked and revised to ensure there were no significant discrepancies in the review process. The categories were subsequently reviewed for each following 10% of articles until the review process was completed with all 97 articles (Le et al., 2019; Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

Various aspects were extracted, collated, and presented in the synthesis: (1) publication fields of studies in authenticity; (2) research methods, sources of data and event stakeholders approached; (3) types of events; (4) applied authenticity typology and theoretical foundations; (5) target authenticity concepts in relation to event stakeholders approached; (6) key concepts investigated in conjunction to authenticity and their inter-relationships. The next section presents the descriptive findings in tables and figures, followed by the summary and discussion of key review findings and directions for future research.

4. Findings

4.1. Publication fields

The key fields of journals, conferences, and books publishing the 97 records are outlined in Table 1 while Table 2 outlines three key journal fields and key journal outlets of 88 journal articles. In total, since 1996, there were 70 journals across 11 different fields publishing authenticity studies in events, which yield significant insights into the movement and growth of knowledge on this topic. Tourism and hospitality have increasingly been a dominant field which underpins over 60% of the total records. Events is also a popular field for publishing with 21.6%, followed by sociology and cultural studies with 17.5%. In the period from 1996 to 2000, authenticity in events was only considered in the three contexts including music and performing arts, tourism and hospitality, and sociology and cultural studies. Authenticity in events then was rarely studied to facilitate event and destination management, but to understand and manage performing arts within events (Cohen, 1999; Duffy, 2000). The next fifteen years (2001–2015) however, saw the emerging diversification of five major fields. Yet, the proliferation in the

Table 2
Major journal disciplines and major journals.

Major Disciplines by Journal (No. of Journals)	No. of Journal Articles	%
Sole Tourism & Hospitality (34)	50	56.8%
No. 1: Annals of Tourism Research	7	
No. 2: Current Issues in Tourism	4	
No. 3: Tourism Management	3	
Journal of Heritage Tourism	3	
Events/ Festivals (6)	17	19.3%
No. 1: Event Management	6	
No. 2: International Journal of Event and Festival Management	3	
Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events	3	
Sociology & Cultural Studies (11)	15	17%
No. 1: Tourism, Culture and Communication	3	
No. 2: Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	2	
South Asian History and Culture	2	
TOTAL JOURNALS (70)	88	100%

number of publication fields did not start until the most recent period of 2016–2020, when there were 52 records across 10 major fields, with an increasing focus on events, sociology and cultural studies, and urban and rural studies (in addition to the sustained growth in the field of tourism and hospitality). The emerging focus on sociology and cultural studies as well as urban and rural studies echoes the scholarly movement towards addressing commodification issues in cultures and events (Mackley-Crump, 2016; Mokgachane, Basupi, & Lenao, 2021), along with using events as a vehicle for regional development and reducing regional imbalances (Clark & Rice, 2019; Lin & Bestor, 2020), all of which are aligned with the development of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015).

4.2. Research methods

Table 3 outlines the research approaches and methods used. Half of the studies (49.5% of total records) used a qualitative approach with data gathering and analysis, which has been increasingly utilised in the recent years with 27 studies between 2016 and 2020 (this alone accounted for 64.3% of total qualitative studies). The dominance of qualitative research in the event/festival context implies that authenticity has not been fully developed in terms of the ways the concept is assessed and measured (which is in line with both Belhassen et al., 2008 and Le et al., 2019). In fact, most qualitative studies used a combination of methods, predominantly semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant observations, and ethnographic fieldwork (Table 3) to describe how authenticity is constructed and impacted by other phenomena within the event space (Table 4). All of these methods offer rich sources of data and are highly relevant for examining social and community phenomena in tourism and events studies (Helgadóttir,

Table 1
Publication fields of studies in authenticity in events.

Publication Field by Journal/Conference/Book	Frequency*	%	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020
Sole Tourism & Hospitality	59	60.8%	1	5	16	12	25
Events	21	21.6%		4	5	3	9
Sociology & Cultural Studies	17	17.5%	1	2	5	2	7
Music & Performing Arts	5	5.2%	3				2
Communications	4	4.1%		2		2	
Multidisciplinary	4	4.1%			1		3
Sports	3	3.1%		1	1		1
Urban & Rural Studies	3	3.1%				1	2
General Marketing & Consumer Behaviour	1	1.0%					1
General Business Management	1	1.0%					1
Education	1	1.0%					1
Total (*N* = 97)			5	14	28	20	52

*The total frequency is >97 as multiple disciplines can apply.

Table 3

Methods used by year of publication.

Approaches (No. of Records)	Frequency	%	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020
Qualitative Approach (42)		49.5%	4	2	11	4	27
Mix of Qualitative Methods	*28*						
Semi-structured/Unstructured Interviews	25						
Participant Observations	23						
Ethnographic Fieldwork	13						
Document Analysis	7						
Qualitative Surveys	3						
Informal Conversations	2						
Focus Groups	2						
Qualitative Case Study	2						
Formal Meetings	1						
Semi-structured/Unstructured Interviews	*4*						
Qualitative Case Study	*4*						
Participant Observations	*2*						
Ethnographic Fieldwork	*2*						
Non-Participant Observations	*1*						
Qualitative Surveys	*1*						
Quantitative Approach (32)		33.0%		4	6	7	15
Questionnaires/ Surveys	31						
Experiments	1						
Mixed-Methods Approach (17)		17.5%	1	3	4	5	4

Table 4

Source of data by research method.

	Source of Data (Frequency)	Frequency	%	No. of QUANT	No. of QUAL	No. of MIXED
Primary Data (Event Stakeholders)	Attendees (65)		67.0%	31	21	13
	Tourists (residing outside the host region)	*40*				
	Locals	*33*				
	Attendees	*22*				
	Event Personnel (37)		38.1%	5	21	11
	Event Organisers	*24*				
	Event Performers/Re-enactors	*19*				
	Event Staff	*16*				
	Event Vendors	*10*				
	Volunteers	*5*				
	Sponsors/Partners	*4*				
	Local Community (22)		22.7%	3	14	5
	Local Residents	*17*				
	Local Governments	*13*				
	Local Businesses	*5*				
	Other (7)		7.2%	1	4	2
	DMOs	*4*				
	Field Researchers	*2*				
	Travel Agencies	*2*				
	Photographers/Journalists	*2*				
	Religious Leaders	*1*				
	Public Figures	*1*				
	Ambassadors	*1*				
Secondary Data	Archival Materials (newspaper, press releases, media/online interviews, government reports; event materials) (16)		16.5%	1	13	2

Einarsdóttir, Burns, Gunnarsdóttir, & Matthíasdóttir, 2019) and have been increasingly adopted in qualitative tourism studies in the last five years (Wilson, Mura, Sharif, & Wijesinghe, 2020).

Within the quantitative studies (33% of the total records), the most widely employed method has been questionnaires, with statements/ questions to measure authenticity to test the relationship between authenticity with other concepts or to develop a measurement scale for authenticity in events/festivals. Surprisingly, only a small minority (17.5% of the total studies) adopted a mixed methods approach, mainly to define authenticity from different perspectives (i.e., Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Matheson, 2008).

4.3. Sources of data and Event stakeholders approached

Table 4 presents a cross-tabulation between research methods and sources of data utilised. The vast majority of studies used primary data sources with researchers approaching various population groups (i.e., event stakeholders) to explore, for instance, their perceptions of authenticity, with only a small proportion of studies referring to secondary data sources (16.5% of studies), essentially archival material. Within those using primary data, the predominantly approached event stakeholders consisted of event attendees, which were present in 67% of total studies, thus showing the ongoing importance of understanding and keeping abreast of event attendees' expectations and changing behaviour over time. Given the heterogeneity of event attendees, researchers often further categorised this group. For instance, most studies turning to event attendees focused on attendees residing outside the host region, hereafter referred to as tourists. The dominant presence of tourists points to the ongoing prevalence of using authenticity to enhance tourist-centric event experience and the recognition of authentic experiences as a critical antecedent to event tourism. This is in line with Getz and Page's (2016) assertion that event tourism experience

should still be prioritised, and studied in a holistic way, from the needs, motivations, attitudes and expectations brought to the event, through the actual living experience, all the way to reflections on the event, including meanings attached to it and influences on future behaviour.

In addition, a sizeable portion of studies included locals, stressing the importance of local attendees' notable understandings of authenticity within their area of residence. Perhaps this is due to their "more objective" understandings of authenticity, which leads to the tendency of them being chosen as a "benchmark" to compare with those who reside further away from the host region (i.e., tourists) (Brida, Disegna, & Osti, 2012; Marcher, Erschbamer, & Pechlaner, 2019; Martin, 2010).

Following attendees, event personnel was the second most studied event stakeholder group, with several subgroups being explored. Among these, the most common were event organisers (24.7% of total studies) a somewhat expected trend given event organisers have knowledge about authenticity, that said, most objective form of authenticity since they produce/stage the event (Edensor, 2001; Jeong & Santos, 2004). Most studies utilised event organisers as a part of their "thick description" process in ethnography/fieldwork. In addition, several studies employed event managers to emphasise their responsibility to offer experiences which are regarded as authentic and henceforth it is their role to educate attendees about such matters. On the other hand, it is surprising that only 19.6% of studies sought their data from event performers/re-enactors considering their key role in delivering authentic experiences. This is in contrast with the argument by Carnegie and McCabe (2008) and Pezzi (2017) that the roles adopted by professional heritage industries, event organisers, tourists, and re-enactors are crucial for creating meaningful events and as such, they represent unique frames through which to understand issues of authenticity and identity both in the production and consumption of post-modern cultural heritage attractions, indicating an evolving negotiation of staging authenticity in the contemporary heritage event space (Gardiner et al., 2022).

While local communities are seen as the "control group" with more power to perform "cool authentication" of cultural performances in events/festivals (Cohen & Cohen, 2012), and as the stakeholder group directly affected by contested authenticity (Martin, 2010), commodification (Intason et al., 2019; Mokgachane et al., 2021), and social erosion (Marcher et al., 2019), their perspectives were only explored in 22.7% of total studies. Included in local communities were mostly local residents (16.5%) and local governments (13.4%), with some studies also focusing on local businesses (5.2%). It is interesting to note that those studies discussing local residents' perspective tend to examine cultural authenticity as a whole and its societal impacts, rather than event-focused authenticity. Specifically, such studies used the event as a context to discuss the implications of cultural event commercialisation (Intason et al., 2019), cultural commodification (Martin, 2010; Mokgachane et al., 2021), to evidence events as a tool to revitalise/regenerate regional communities (Clark & Rice, 2019; Lin & Bestor, 2020), strengthen local traditions and cultural awareness (Pezzi, 2017; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015), and enhance social cohesion and local identity (Syafrini et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the small number of studies looking at the local governments' perspective was noticeable even though local governments play an increasingly critical role in developing event-focused strategies that enhance a destination's attractiveness (Rust, 2020), stimulating creative interventions and planning activities that can affect local development and regeneration processes (Stankova & Vassenska, 2015), as well as preserving, promoting and protecting local traditions and culture (Martin, 2010). In the analysis of the stakeholder groups approached for the investigation of authenticity, how these groups were investigated became apparent. Half of the studies (50.5%) focused on a single group of stakeholders, and within the other half of studies that investigated multiple groups of stakeholders, 16.5% investigated two, 18.6% examined three, and only 3.1% focused on four. This distribution and the particular smaller percentages of research studying authenticity among different groups of actors in events have led to an in-depth understanding of specific groups but a limited discussion of boarder authenticity-related issues that affect and are affected by a multiplicity of actors.

4.4. Types of events

Table 5 illustrates types of events analysed in the 97 records adapting the typology of planned events developed by Getz and Page (2016). Since authenticity studies in events are culture- and/or tradition-focused, re-enactment, heritage and historical events are separated from cultural, ethnic, religious and spiritual events). Folk events were also recorded as an independent type due to the ongoing distinctive nature of the folklore/folk culture in society (Duffy, 2000; Rust, 2020). In addition to the sustained growth of studies focusing on cultural, ethnic, religious and spiritual events for the last two decades, authenticity scholarship has also been increasingly focused on re-enactment, heritage and historical events. This is perhaps because reliving periods of history, for example, the European Middles Ages and medieval culture, through leisure and recreational experiences has been increasingly adopted by event organisers and destination strategists under the influence of mass media and the success of historical television series (Gardiner et al., 2022). Music and food and wine have also attracted increasing academic interest as contexts for understanding authenticity (Prayag et al., 2022). This might be due to the incorporation of different contemporary elements that contributes to immersiveness and memorability in events such as technology (Bossey, 2020; Le & Yung, 2022; Yung et al., 2022), socio-spatial co-created experience (Clark & Rice, 2019; Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Morey, Griffin, & Riley, 2017), post-postmodern consumer culture (Skandalis et al., 2019), and peer-to-peer social dining platform (Davies et al., 2022).

Also, it was clear that business events assumed only 1% of the cases analysed. This outcome is perhaps due to discussions about producing authentic events are hardly ever considered within the context of the corporate world. Certain business events such as conferences and trade shows are rather homogenised, using organisational and planning templates which are not imbued with cultural idiosyncrasies (Le, 2022a, 2022b). When one looks more closely however, at the creative possibilities when planning business events, there are many examples of cultural experiences which are used as introductions to conferences, food and beverage possibilities at trade shows, heritage buildings which are used as venues for corporate events, to name just a few (Arcodia, 2022). At the same time, the lack of scholarly attention given to the context of business events is somewhat surprising given the centrality of identity and authenticity of the organisation in a wide range of business events including team building events, product launches and annual meetings.

4.5. Applied authenticity typology and theoretical foundations

Table 6 presents a timeline for the authenticity typology examined to illustrate the evolution of the conceptualisation of authenticity in events in the last 20 years. The number of studies adopting constructive authenticity (69.1%) and existential authenticity (36.1%) rose exponentially in the period of 2016–2020. This trend is aligned with the increasing adoption of re-created heritage experiences (Gardiner et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022) in which authenticity is conceptualised as a partial resemblance/replica to past events and just one version of the reality (Waitt, 2000), and attributed by staging practices that are commercialised and tailored for tourist consumption (McKercher & Du, 2002). Nevertheless, it does not mean that objective authenticity is neglected in the event space. Indeed, the investigations undertaking the objectivist stance to authenticity increased from 8 to 18 studies between 2006 and 2020. This pattern accords with the emerging (yet still limited) research attention to the cool(er) authenticators within the event space such as event personnel and locals, which are also evidenced in the discussion on event stakeholder groups approached (Table 4).

Table 5

Types of events by year of publication.

Type of Event*	Frequency	%	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020
Cultural, ethnic, religious and spiritual	58	59.8%	1	5	16	13	23
Re-enactment, heritage and historical	26	26.8%	2	4	5	2	13
Music	11	11.3%		1	1	1	8
Folk	7	7.2%	2		2		3
Sporting	7	7.2%		1	3		3
Art	5	5.2%			1		4
Food & Wine	5	5.2%			1	1	3
Business Events	1	1.0%					1

*The total frequency is >97 as multiple settings can apply.

Table 6

Authenticity typology examined by year of publication.

Authenticity typology	Frequency	%	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020
Constructive/Staged Authenticity	67	69.1%	4	6	17	12	28
Existential Authenticity	35	36.1%	3	1	8	5	18
Objective Authenticity	24	24.7%	1	1	6	4	12
Cool & Hot Authentication	8	8.2%		1	1	1	5
Postmodern Authenticity	7	7.2%			4		3
Organisation Related Authenticity	1	1.0%				1	
Theoplacity	1	1.0%				1	
Originality & Artificiality	1	1.0%				1	

Notably, certain authenticity typologies received very little attention from scholars, which is surprising given broader scholarly and social trends. In particular, postmodern authenticity received extremely limited scholarly attention, despite that the trend of postmodern consumerism is on the rise, characterised by emotional and (perhaps) irrational behaviour influenced by symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria (Skandalis et al., 2019). Organisation-related authenticity and theoplacity also received extremely limited attention. Indeed, only one study (Molleda & Jain, 2013) examined the organisational aspect of authenticity, that is, "authentic organizations make commitments that are core to their business mission, philosophy, and vision, and live by it" (Molleda & Jain, 2013, p. 4) despite the concept being solidly explored in the hospitality and restaurant contexts (Kim, 2021; Le, 2022a, 2022b; Le et al., 2019; Le, Arcodia, Abreu Novais, Kralj, & Phan, 2021). Similarly, while being introduced in the tourism literature for quite some time (Belhassen et al., 2008; Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010; Jones, 2010), theoplacity was not adopted until Robinson and Clifford's (2012) study of an Australian medieval festival, which until now remains the only study on theoplacity in events. Theoplacity incorporates the key feature of existential authenticity, that an individual's perception and interpretation of authenticity is privileged, in addition to the toured objects as the referential points for forming authenticity judgements (Le et al., 2019; Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Authenticity research in events also presents two new dimensions to the literature established from a rigorous measurement scale, including originality and artificiality (Castéran & Roederer, 2013), which are developed based on an authenticity scale of a tourist site. Nevertheless, this scale has not been adopted in any of other studies examining authenticity in the event space, which puts its generalisability into question.

Table 7 presents the distribution of authenticity typology examined in each type of events. While constructive authenticity has been dominantly examined across different types of events, recent years have seen an emerging trend of studying existential authenticity in music (Rust, 2020; Skandalis et al., 2019; Szmigin et al., 2017) and sporting events (Kim & Mao, 2021; Wong et al., 2020). The relationship between music and existential authenticity is not new in the literature (see Duffy, 2000; Smith, 2000; Wood & Smith, 2004). Matheson (2008) described the ways in which emotion is evoked by music and the relationship between music, emotion and audience identities, which amplifies existential authenticity among music festival attendees. Indeed, music could arouse emotional responses from the audience as the architectonic construction can provoke particular feelings from the audience, and such emotions are the authentic expressions of one's being, and is, in some sense, natural and spontaneous (Matheson, 2008). A similar association can also be found in sports, that is, sport consumption can strengthen community belonging and group affiliation (via fanship) (Fairley & Tyler, 2012), which in turn leads to team and individual identity cultivation (Kim & Mao, 2021).

Giving the strong theoretical notion of authenticity itself, there have been rather limited studies in authenticity at events that adopt further theories and frameworks (only 14 out of 97 records). These are mostly from:

Table 7

Authenticity typology examined by type of events.

Type of Event (Frequency – %)	Constructive/Staged AU	Existential AU	Objective AU	Cool & Hot Authentication	Postmodern AU	Organisation Related AU	Theoplacity	Originality & Artificiality
Cultural, Ethnic, Religious and Spiritual (58–100%)	72.4% (42)	31.0% (18)	24.1% (14)	6.9% (4)	5.2% (3)	1.7% (1)		1.7% (1)
Re-enactment, Heritage and Historical (26–100%)	57.7% (15)	30.8% (8)	23.1% (6)	7.7% (2)	7.7% (2)		3.8% (1)	
Music (11–100%)	54.5% (6)	36.4% (4)	18.2% (2)	18.2% (2)	9.1% (1)			
Folk (7–100%)	85.7% (6)	14.3% (1)	71.4% (5)					
Sporting (7–100%)	71.4% (5)	42.9% (3)		14.3% (1)				
Art (5–100%)	60.0% (3)	40.0% (2)	20.0% (1)					
Food & Wine (4–100%)	75.0% (3)	50.0% (2)	50.0% (2)		25.0% (1)			

Table 8
Target authenticity concepts by year of publication.

Target Authenticity Concept	Frequency	%	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020
Cultural/Heritage Authenticity	49	50.5%	5	3	14	8	19
Festival/Event/Tourist Site Authenticity	48	49.5%		7	12	9	20
Overall Perceived Authenticity	38	39.2%		5	2	9	22
Authenticity as Motivation to Attend Event	24	24.7%		1	8	5	10
City/Urban/Local/Community Authenticity	10	10.3%			1	3	6
Food Authenticity	7	7.2%			2	3	2
Atmosphere Authenticity	3	3.1%					3
Merchandise Authenticity	2	2.1%		2			
Music Authenticity	2	2.1%			1		1
Organisation Authenticity	1	1.0%				1	
Authenticity & Privacy	1	1.0%					1
Venue Authenticity	1	1.0%					1

- Sociology (i.e., Consumer Culture Theory; Equity Theory; Identity Theory; Theory of Sociability; Social Exchange Theory; Social Identity Theory), and
- Consumer behaviour (i.e., Stimulus-Organism-Response Model; Consumer-Based Model of Authenticity' Bitner's Servicescape Model; Quality-Value-Satisfaction Framework; Self-Determination Theory; Theory of Planned Behaviour)
- Economic modelling (i.e., Double-Hurdle Model)

These highlights in theoretical foundations, on the one hand, are in accordance with the consumption focus of authenticity in events. On the other hand, the sociological lens adopted supports the socially constructed notion of authenticity, while hinting at the shifted research focus towards social impacts generated by events through the authenticity phenomenon (Lee et al., 2021; Lin & Lee, 2020).

4.6. Target authenticity concepts

Target authenticity concepts examined in the 97 records are presented in Table 8, while Table 9 shows groups of event stakeholders approached to explore each concept. It is important to note that beside the significant number of studies examining festival/event/tourist site authenticity (which is justified by the event context examined in this synthesis), cultural/heritage authenticity appears to be another dominant concept studied in the authenticity literature within the event space, which perhaps points to the sustained importance of cultures and traditions in motivating tourists to attend events (Colombo & Marques, 2020; Gardiner et al., 2022), as well as the increasing focus on culture/tradition promotion and preservation in response to cultural erosion and commodification within the host community (Mokgachane et al., 2021; Syafrini et al., 2020).

Another large cluster of studies focused on overall perceived authenticity (39.2%), followed by authenticity as a motivational factor to attend events (24.7%). Overall, perceived authenticity has observed an exponential growth from only two studies in the 2006–2010 period to

22 studies in the 2016–2020 period, with 18 out of 22 studies conducted to understand event attendees' perceptions of authenticity to facilitate authentic experiences, four studies examining event personnel's perceptions (Bossey, 2020; Rust, 2020; Slater, 2019; Tate, 2020), and only two studies looking at perceived authenticity from the local point of view (locals that are non-attendees) (Marcher et al., 2019; Rust, 2020). As a result, although there has been increasing scholarly attention on the cultural and/or social impacts of events on host communities, the data used to investigate such matter did not reflect this trend, that is, to focus substantially on those that do not attend the events. Nevertheless, the local perspective is popular among the examination of city/urban/local/community authenticity illustrated in events (see Table 9), and 4 out of 5 studies have been published from 2015 onwards (King, Cela, Fokkema, & Morettini, 2021; Lin & Bestor, 2020; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015; Syafrini et al., 2020). Overall, it can be seen from Table 10 that apart from city/urban/local/community authenticity, the locals' perspective has not been targeted profoundly in the authenticity literature in events/festivals. This accords and justifies further the lack of attention to locals' perspectives discussed in the event stakeholder section.

4.7. Key concepts investigated in conjunction with authenticity

Table 10 outlines the key concepts investigated in the 97 records based on frequency of investigation. The most explored concepts were tourist related (34%), in particular, tourist satisfaction and motivation to attend. Impacts/processes resulting from events (30%) observed the second highest attention when it comes to authenticity research, in which issues revolving around commodification received the most attention (13 out of the 29 studies that examined impacts/processes resulting from events). In addition to event management concepts (26.8%), other authenticity-related concepts (20.6%) such as escapism, togetherness/sense of belonging, and sacredness have also experienced sizable scholarly interest in the extant literature. It is worthy to note that all these authenticity-related concepts revolve around the existential dimension of authenticity, which is event-attendee-centred. This

Table 9
Event stakeholder groups examined in each target authenticity concept.

Target Authenticity Concept (Frequency – 100%)	Attendees	Event Personnel	Locals	Others
Cultural/Heritage Authenticity (49–100%)	65.3% (32)	44.9% (22)	26.5% (13)	8.2% (4)
Festival/Event/Tourist Site Authenticity (48–100%)	77.1% (37)	35.4% (17)	16.7% (8)	6.3% (3)
Overall Perceived Authenticity (38–100%)	78.9% (30)	36.8% (14)	13.2% (5)	2.6% (1)
Authenticity as Motivation to Attend Event (24–100%)	91.7% (22)	12.5% (3)	8.3% (2)	4.2% (1)
City/Urban/Local/Community Authenticity (10–100%)	60.0% (6)	40.0% (4)	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)
Food Authenticity (7–100%)	71.4% (5)	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)
Atmosphere Authenticity (3–100%)	100% (3)	33.3% (1)		
Merchandise Authenticity (2–100%)		100% (2)		
Music Authenticity (2–100%)	100% (2)			
Organisation Authenticity (1–100%)	100% (1)	100% (1)		100% (1)
Authenticity & Privacy (1–100%)		100% (1)		100% (1)
Venue Authenticity (1–100%)		100% (1)		

Table 10

Key concepts investigated in conjunction to authenticity.

Key Concepts Investigated In 97 Records (No. of Records)	Frequency	%	Key Concepts Investigated In 97 Records (No. of Records)	Frequency	%
Tourist Related (33)		34.0%	Other Authenticity-Related (20)		20.6%
Tourist satisfaction	16		*Escapism*	8	
Tourist motivation to attend	12		*Togetherness/Sense of belonging*	4	
Festival perceived quality	9		*Sacredness*	4	
Tourist revisit intention to festival/destination	7		*Uniqueness*	3	
Festival perceived value	5		*Nostalgia*	3	
Tourist loyalty	5		*Self-identity expression/enrichment*	3	
Tourist willingness to pay	3		*Unusualness*	2	
Festival perceived benefits	2		*Liminality*	2	
Festival perceived commercialisation	2		*Liveness*	1	
Tourist emotion	2		Culture/History/Local Related (15)		15.5%
Destination perceived image	1		*City/local identity*	8	
Tourist perceived behavioural control	1		*Cultural/ethnic identity*	5	
Tourist event attachment	1		*City/local history*	1	
Tourist trust	1		*Interpretation education practices*	1	
Tourist risk aversion	1		*Regeneration of cultural heritage*	1	
Fandom	1		Place Related (14)		14.4%
Tourist cultural awareness	1		*Sense of place/Place attachment/Place identity*	12	
Tourist support for tourism development	1		*Place dependency*	2	
Impacts/Processes Resulting from Events (29)		30.0%	*Place marketing/branding*	2	
Commodification/Decommodification	13		Community Related (11)		11.3%
Conflict of identities	5		*Diaspora community*	3	
Economic impact	4		*Community development/building*	3	
Commercialisation	3		*Sense of community/Community identity*	3	
Cultural/Tradition Evolution	3		*Community involvement & control*	2	
Spectacularisation	2		*Sense of local pride*	1	
Revitalisation of tradition/culture	2		Social Related (8)		8.2%
Innovative hybrid cultural forms	2		*Social cohesion/integration*	4	
Cultural appropriation	2		*Social relations*	3	
Cultural sharing	1		*Social inclusivity*	2	
Culture homogenization/ heterogenization	1		*Social governance*	1	
Cultural misrepresentation	1		*Social structure*	1	
Cultural-economic conflict	1		Destination Related (6)		6.2%
Conflict in control vs partnership	1		*Destination branding*	2	
Deviant practices/behaviour	1		*Sustainable development*	2	
Event Management (26)		26.8%	*Destination revitalisation*	1	
Market segmentation	5		*Destination competitiveness*	1	
Experience co-creation	4		Tourism Indicators (3)		3.1%
Sustainability	4		*Tourist expenditure*	3	
Festival branding	3		*Frequency of visits*	1	
Festival marketing	3		*Recency of visits*	1	
Design/Architecture	3		Urban Related (3)		3.1%
Festival staging	2		*Urban development*	3	
Functionality	2		*Urban policy*	2	
Privatisation	1		Vendor Related (1)		1.0%
Festivity	1		*Vendor expenditure*	1	
Transformational development	1		*Vendor motivation to attend*	1	
Accessibility	1				
Feasibility	1				
Overcrowding	1				
Quality management	1				
The use of ICT	1				
The use of social media	1				
Liability/Risk	1				

significance of existentialism is in accordance with the growth of studies examining existential authenticity especially in the 2016–2020 period.

4.7.1. Relationships between key concepts investigated

The associations between the key concepts investigated also yield significant insights into research trends of the extant literature. Table 11 depicts frequency of association between the key concepts examined in relation to authenticity in events. Each key concept is ranked based on their centrality to other key concepts, which is measured by centrality value (computed from an online systems thinking software – www. kumu.io). Centrality values refers to the distance each concept is from all other concepts; concepts with high centrality value can spread information to the rest of the network most easily and usually have high visibility into what is happening across the network (www.kumu.io).

Impacts/processes resulting from events was the most central concept (i.e., examined the most intensively in relation to the other

concepts), followed by event management. Interestingly, despite receiving the most significant attention (see Table 10), tourist related concepts were only ranked third in terms of centrality (see Table 11). Tourist related concepts were mostly examined in conjunction with event management (in 9 records) and with other authenticity related concepts (in 6 records), whereas there were 10 records investigating event management in relation to impacts/processes resulting from events. These findings indicate that although there has been abundant research about tourist-centred authenticity in the event space, the impacts generated from tourist related concepts on other aspects in the event domain are not as widespread as those concepts regarding impacts/processes resulting from events and event management, given the heightened focus on sustainability and alignment with the SDGs in this space (Getz & Page, 2016; Mair & Smith, 2021; Van Niekerk, 2017).

Apart from being jointly studied with event management, impacts/processes resulting from events was usually examined in conjunction

Table 11
Frequency of association between key concepts investigated (frequencies >5 are highlighted in grey).

Centrality-Based Ranking	#1 Impacts/Processes resulting from Events	#2 Event Management	#3 Place Related	#3 Tourist Related	#3 Other Authenticity Related	#4 Community Related	#4 Destination Related	#5 Culture/History/ Local Related	#6 Social Related	#7 Urban Related	#8 Vendor Related
Centrality Value*	0.88	0.83	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.75	0.75	0.74	0.61	0.58	0.53
#1 Impacts/Processes resulting from Events											
#2 Event Management	10**										
#3 Place Related	3	4									
#3 Tourist Related	4	9	3								
#3 Other Authenticity Related	5	7	5	6							
#4 Community Related	4	1	5	2	1						
#4 Destination Related	3	3	2	1	1	4					
#5 Culture/History/Local Related	8	3	5		1	5	2				
#6 Social Related	5	2			3			3			
#7 Urban Related	1	1	2	1							
#8 Vendor Related	1	1									

* Centrality value refers to the distance each element is from all other elements. In general, elements with high centrality value can spread information to the rest of the network most easily and usually have high visibility into what is happening across the network (www.kumu.io).
** Frequency of association refers to no. of times a concept is examined in relation to another concept.
Note: No association score was calculated since the frequency of association is much smaller than the total examined records (N = 97).
Tourism Indicators was not examined in relation to any of the above key concepts thus was not included in the association table.

with culture/history/local related (in 8 records). Indeed, the dominant focus on the contemporary issues regarding commodification, commercialisation, and conflict of identities when it comes to event generated impacts is in accordance with the focus on preserving city/local identity and cultural/ethnic identity when it comes to culture/history/local related concepts in many studies (e.g., Lin & Bestor, 2020; Syafrini et al., 2020). Social related (e.g., social cohesion/integration, social relations) and other authenticity related concepts (e.g., escapism, togetherness) were also examined in a close relation to impacts/processes resulting from events (in 5 records). In addition to tourist related concepts, event management (which had the second highest centrality value) was often studied in relation to other authenticity concepts (in 7 records) to understand experience co-creation with sense of belonging (Rust, 2020) or the role of experiential marketing in enhancing escapism and togetherness (Skandalis et al., 2019). Place related concepts (which had the third highest centrality value) also had a strong connection to other authenticity related, community related, and culture/history/local related concepts. This echoes the existing literature in terms of the significant role of sense of place and place attachment in authentic event experiences from both event attendee and local resident perspectives
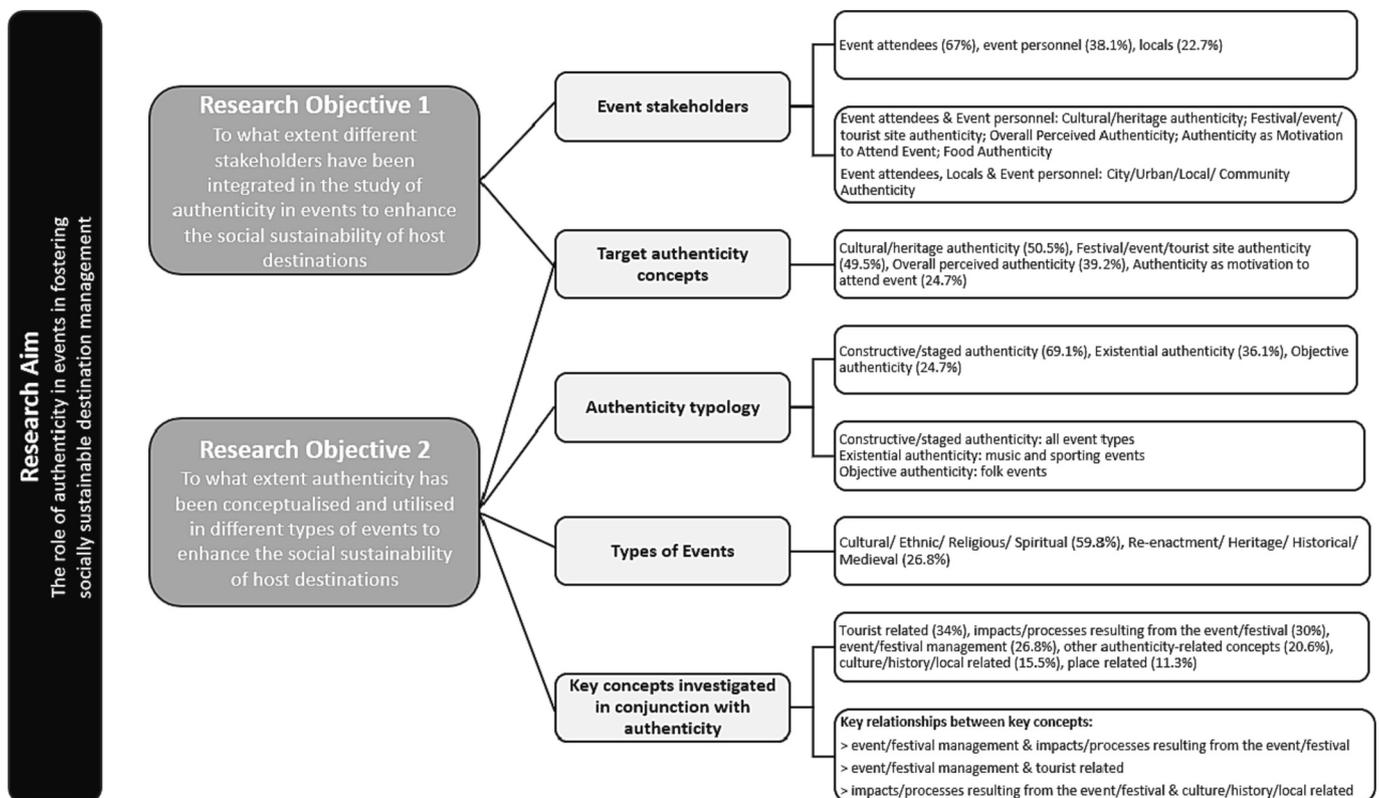

Fig. 2. Summary of the synthesis.

(Clark & Rice, 2019; Pezzi, 2017). Community related concepts also had a strong association with culture/history/local related concepts, with several studies examined how events transform local authenticity and community identity (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008; Lin & Bestor, 2020; MacLeod, 2006) and how to regenerate cultural heritage using events (Pezzi, 2017).

5. Discussion of findings and future research directions

Figure 2 summarises the key findings from the synthesis that help fulfil the overarching research aim and two research objectives. With regards to RO1 – event stakeholder perspectives addressed in the literature, this study revealed a clear imbalance towards event attendees, specifically dominated by those who are visiting from outside the region where the event is hosted (i.e., tourists). This disproportionate attention clearly points to the need to consider the attitudes and perceptions of the wide range of stakeholders that bring events together and who are affected by them. Concerning RO2, the review of the existing literature on authenticity in events indicated a clear trend in the trajectory of research towards the investigation of the impacts of events on local communities. This trend is consistent with broader phenomena in the research community including the increasing recognition of the importance of social sustainability in contemporary tourism and events (Mair & Smith, 2021) and a stronger focus on responsible production and consumption (Han, 2021; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). In particular, the findings suggested that while the majority of the existing literature authenticity in the context of events still focused predominantly on catering to tourist/attendee experiences, other impactful outcomes for the host communities and destinations have also been generated as a result of authenticity studies. For example, existing research has portrayed a clear focus on impacts/processes resulting from events (e.g., commodification, conflict of identities, commercialisation), in addition to some emerging scholarship in cultural-related concepts (e.g., local/

cultural identity), place-related concepts (e.g., sense of place, place identity), community related concepts (e.g. sense of community/community identity, sense of local pride), and social-related concepts (e.g., social cohesion, social relations). This in turn indicates that authenticity in the context of events plays a critical role in nurturing the social sustainability of the host destination, thus responding to the overaching aim of this study. Nevertheless, it is evident that existing authenticity research in events, with dispersed effort to foster social sustainability of host destinations, has not been able to unlock the power of authenticity, which can be a key determinant driving social sustainability in host destinations. With this in mind, several future research directions have been put forward.

5.1. Authenticity ecosystem: a multi-actor network

The emerging focus towards social sustainability observed throughout the analysis has led to the development of a multi-actor network that outlines ways that authenticity can be used to benefit the host destinations. In particular, by applying a systems thinking approach (www.kumu.io), an *authenticity ecosystem* (see Fig. 3) was established, in which participating actors were derived from the key concepts investigated in Table 10. The development of the *authenticity ecosystem* also led to the identification of four directions for future research on authenticity in events (see Fig. 4) that provide substantial insights into tourism development and destination management research and practice. These directions represent areas or issues that currently have not been fully embraced by tourism and events scholars but are important in future scholarly efforts. The following sections will elucidate how authenticity in events can permeate to benefit the host destination as illustrated via the *authenticity ecosystem*, as well as elaborate further upon the four directions in future authenticity research and their implications for event and destination management.
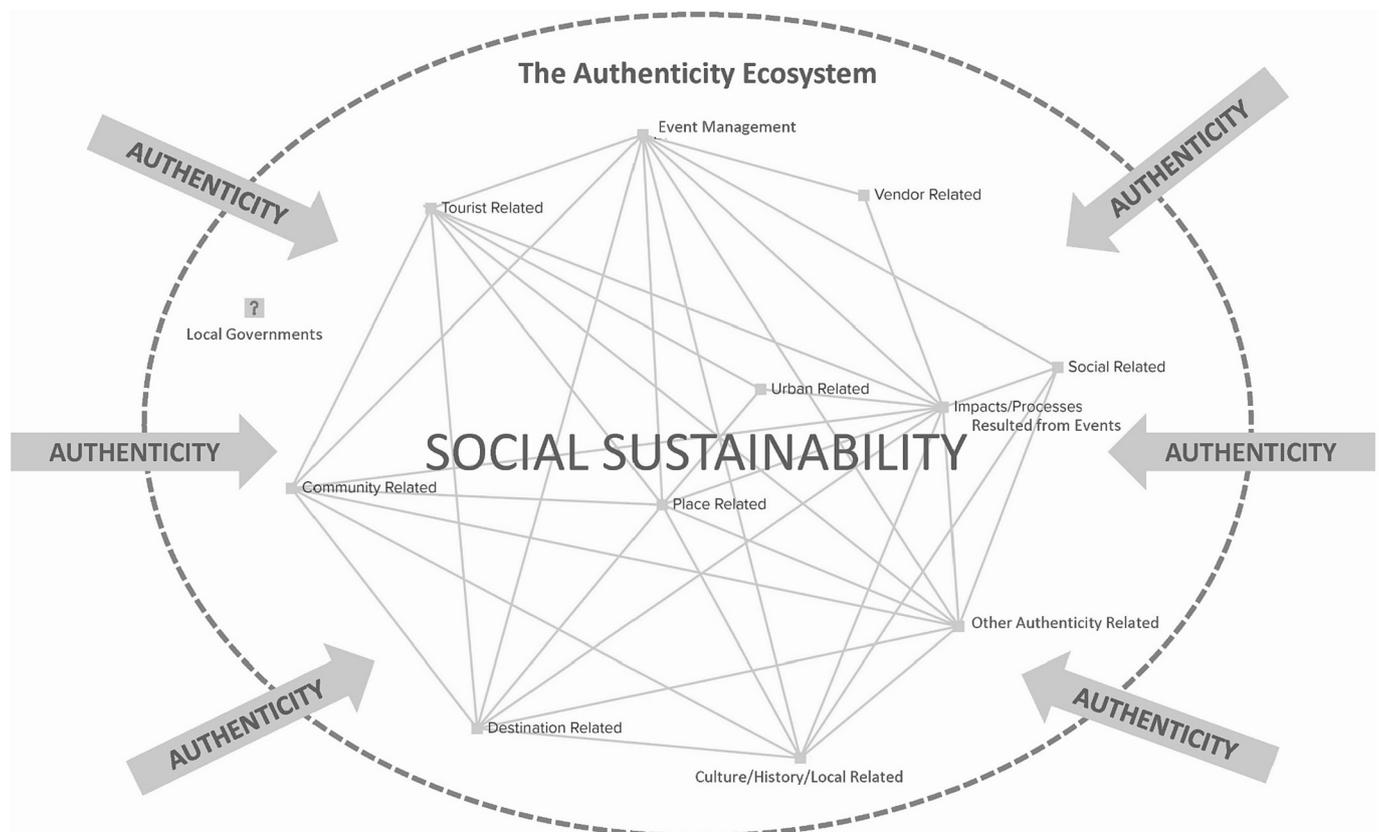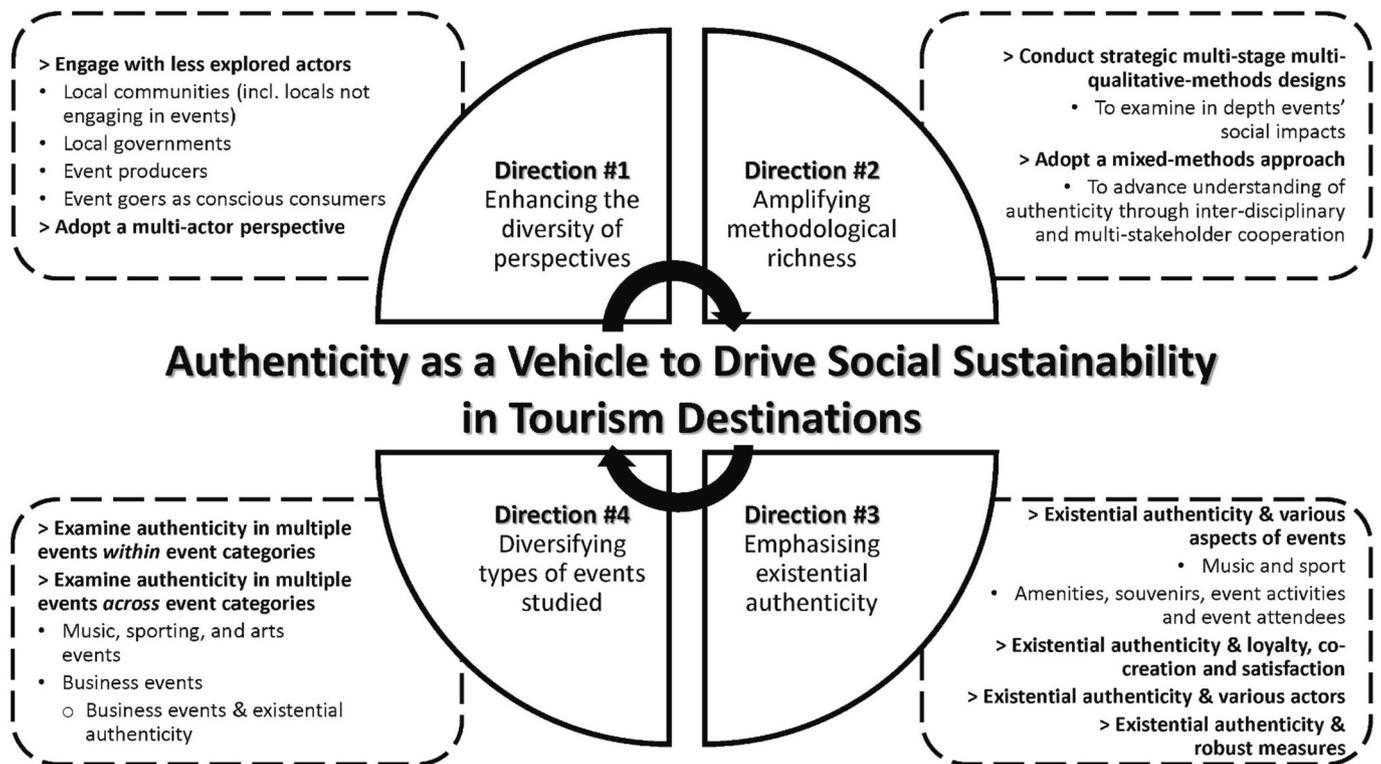

Fig. 3. The authenticity ecosystem.

Fig. 4. Implications for future authenticity research.

5.2. Direction #1: enhancing the diversity of perspectives

Given the clear imbalance towards event attendees as the predominant event stakeholder approached, future research needs to expand the populations currently approached and engage all relevant actors in examining and creating an authentic event experience that is also economically and socially sustainable, in order fully capture the intricacies of authenticity in events. While doing so, there is also room to expand the theories underpinning such investigations to address the ever relevant actors depicted in the *authenticity ecosystem* to enhance social sustainability for the host communities. In particular, future research should investigate local communities, local governments, producers and event-attendees as conscious consumers.

5.2.1. Local communities

Local communities constitute a relevant party in the discussion of event authenticity. As widely reported in the literature, events can have significant impacts on the cultural and social fabric of host communities and destinations. As illustrated in the *authenticity ecosystem*, authenticity in events can permeate to benefit the host destination in various ways. For example, events that reflect the values and identities of host communities are more likely to gather the support and engagement of local actors. These 'authenticity-enriched' events can then be more effective in attracting visitors, who see events as opportunities to engage with local and cultural heritage that shapes memorable experiences (Sharpley & Stone, 2014). In turn, the continued visitation and re-visitation of events can potentiate positive impacts of events on communities. In another instance, events as social phenomena can foster social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007), given that they represent opportunities for communities to come together. Benefits include enhanced social cohesion (Sharpley & Stone, 2014), place attachment, local identity and pride (Quinn & Wilks, 2013), thus contributing to the social sustainability of events and permeating the host communities and destinations with the benefits of authenticity. It is then surprising that while research on the economic and social sustainability of events has increased in

recent years (Mair, 2019; Mair & Smith, 2021; Van Niekerk, 2017), the implications for authenticity have not been fully explored. By engaging the local actors and groups, future research can explore how the authenticity of events can contribute to more cohesive and ultimately more resilient communities. One particular subgroup of interest includes locals who do not participate in events. Understanding why such individuals do not engage in events and the role that authenticity, or its absence, plays in that decision has important implications for the role of events in host communities.

5.2.2. Local governments

Local governments represent another stakeholder group that was overlooked in the extant scholarship as shown in the *authenticity ecosystem* (see Fig. 3), thus can be better engaged in future investigations with other key concepts. Given that the search for authentic experiences is one of the key trends in tourism research (Rickly, 2022), authenticity becomes an important element in the attractiveness and competitiveness of both events and destinations. Local governments play an increasingly critical role in developing event-focused strategies that enhance a destination's competitive position (Abreu Novais, 2022). Similarly, local authorities are influential in promoting communiy participatiton, engaging the appropriate actors to carry forward such event agendas, and also managing the positive and negative impacts of events. Given their central role, their perspectives and actions can contribute to the debate of authenticity in events.

5.2.3. Event producers

Similarly, the perspective of event producers can generate important insights. Events are initiatives that require the cooperation of multiple parties that come together to create the event experience – organisers, staff, volunteers, performers and re-enactors, sponsors, suppliers and vendors. Ultimately, from an authenticity lens, a successful event depends on the authenticity of its various elements, and as a result, the perspectives of those delivering them are equally significant. As postulated in the *authenticity ecosystem*, ensuring that the views of all actors

are sought and analysed can enable a sustainable negotiation of staging authenticity that minimises the compromise of commodification due to the pursuit of fulfilling postmodernism and contemporary consumerism (Skandalis et al., 2019; Zhou, He, & Li, 2022). While collecting data from producers has been recognised as valuable and some parties have received researchers' attention, not all subgroups have been fully paid attention. Besides the potential to help producers create more authentic events (Chhabra, 2005), a greater focus on the producers holistically can also generate greater insights on the cool(er) authenticators within the event space as well as the authentication processes.

5.2.4. Event attendees as conscious consumers

While much of the existing research has explored the perspectives of event attendees, in particular those of tourists, there is room for further investigations by considering tourists not as mere consumers (in which the focus is on motivations and satisfaction) but as active participants in transformative experiences that help them understand their impact on the region and how they can contribute to cultural preservation (Passafaro, 2020). Ultimately, this can help to develop events as co-created educative tools with a potential to revitalise tourism destinations as demonstrated in the *authenticity ecosystem*. This focus at present is only being examined from the local residents' viewpoint, thus missing a crucial perspective.

5.2.5. Towards a multi-actor approach to authenticity in events

In addition to enhancing the understanding of authenticity in events by delving into the less explored perspectives, it is also fundamental that future efforts conduct such examinations from a multi-actor perspective, that is, by simultaneously engaging the various stakeholders involved in the production and consumption of events. Existing research has traditionally explored one or a limited number of parties, thus limiting the potential richness of insights on the topic. While complex, only a holistic approach will fully capture the intricacies of authenticity in events by exploring potential differences in perspectives and actions, as well as their consequential effects on the event and its authenticity. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of authenticity in events can then add to the discussion of how it can contribute to more socially sustainable events which are hosted by more engaged, cohesive and resilient communities.

5.3. Direction #2: amplifying methodological richness

Given the complexity and richness of the phenomenon and the variety of relevant perspectives in its investigation, there is a need for innovative, holistic, multi qualitative methods and mixed methods in the study of authenticity in events. While some initial work has been completed in this regard, these efforts tend to revolve around multi-methods blended in ethnographic fieldwork and mixed qualitative methods which have been mostly scattered and uncoordinated. Strategic multi-stage multi-qualitative-methods designs can not only lead to a more comprehensive understanding of authenticity within the *authenticity ecosystem* but also foster the in-depth examination on how authenticity can mediate social impacts of events and how it contributes to the social sustainability of events and enhanced community resilience.

Also, utilising a mixed methods approach allows the combination of the investigation of specific societal, community, or destination issues emerging from qualitative methods with tested relationships between authenticity and other complex concepts. Furthermore, mixed method approaches can facilitate the proposed multi-stakeholder investigations of authenticity (Direction #1), with the additional advantages of promoting societal change, managing social desirability, and allowing data robustness through stakeholder triangulation (Molina-Azorín & Font, 2016). Ultimately, these approaches will advance the understanding of authenticity through inter-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder cooperation in the event context. This has been increasingly imperative

considering the significant impacts of events on the community and destination level (Brida et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2021) and the widespread influence of globalisation and internationalisation on preserving local traditions and ethnic cultures (Intason et al., 2019; Mokgachane et al., 2021).

5.4. Direction #3: emphasising existential authenticity

When analysing the types of authenticity explored in the existing literature, it became apparent that studies have slowly paid more attention to the existential aspect of authenticity in events. While initial progress has been made in this regard, there is no doubt room for additional research exploring this type of authenticity, and this can be achieved in different ways. First, future research can explore the various aspects of events in the light of existential authenticity. While existing research recognises existential meanings and self-identities as key elements for achieving authentic experiences, most research so far has looked at how culture and tradition shape existential authenticity, leaving various aspects of events unexplored. In particular, there are avenues for research to deepen the discussion of the relationships between music, sport, and existential authenticity, but also to explore if and how other aspects of the event experience such as amenities, souvenirs, event activities and even other attendees contribute to existential authenticity. Second, additional scholarly attention can be placed on examining how existential authenticity can contribute to events' success through notions of loyalty (both event and destination), experience co-creation and satisfaction.

Third, taking into consideration the need for enhancing different perspectives mentioned in Direction #1, future research can further explore existential authenticity related concepts from the various actors involved in events positioned within the *authenticity ecosystem*. This can ultimately lead to a better understanding of the challenges and impacts of events as well as assisting with creating better solutions. Last, and considering the aforementioned need for further methodological sophistication and diversity in Direction #2, additional efforts can be focused on the in-depth exploration of existential authenticity including the development of additional robust measures which can be used to investigate existential authenticity across a variety of events.

5.5. Direction #4: diversifying types of events studied

In broadening and deepening the context in which authenticity in events is examined, further research can include investigation of multiple events, both *within* and *across* event categories. The comparison and contrast of results from different event types can enable the discussion of broader events and community-related themes. Different types of events tend to attract different consumer segments and involve different individuals and groups within communities; as such, cross-event category discussions of authenticity can lead to insights on how to design event calendars that are in line with local identities, thus contributing to more socially sustainable communities. Similarly, comparing perceptions of the various dimensions of authenticity across distinct event types can potentiate the discussion of event success factors not only because event components typically associated with authenticity (e.g., cultural performances) are consistently used in this type of event, but also because consumers are increasingly more socially responsible and more concerned with the values that underpin brands and companies (Kim, 2021; Le, 2022a; Le, Arcodia, Abreu Novais, et al., 2021; Le, Arcodia, Novais, & Kralj, 2021; Molleda & Jain, 2013), thus bringing existential authenticity to the forefront of discussions of authenticity in business events. The study of authenticity *within* and *across* event categories therefore will offer rich insights into advancing the *authenticity ecosystem* and thus fostering its theoretical and practical applications in the context of event and destination management.

6. Implications and limitations

This study systematically and critically synthesises how the notion of authenticity has been addressed in the extant events literature to foster the social sustainability of host destinations. The findings revealed that while the majority of the existing literature authenticity in the context of events still focused predominantly on catering to tourist/attendee experiences, other impactful outcomes for the host communities and destinations have also been generated as a result of authenticity studies. Adopting a systems thinking approach, this study subsequently developed a holistic multi-actor network in which authenticity can be used to provide strategic agendas for the future of event and destination management research. In doing so, this study contributes to both the theorisation and the practice of authenticity in events but also to the understanding of how destination managers can better use authentic events for enhanced attractiveness and competitiveness.

From a theoretical perspective, this paper offers a critical reflection of the state of the topic of authenticity in events with a strong focus on the outcomes regarding social sustainability of host destinations. Specifically, this study highlighted the main trends across lines of investigation, systematised relationships of key concepts investigated in conjunction of authenticity, identified the gaps in current knowledge and proposing avenues for future research with the ultimate aim of fostering stronger social sustainability of host destinations. By applying a systems thinking approach to map out relationships between key concepts investigated in the extant literature, this study posits authenticity as a vehicle permeating the host destinations to drive social sustainability, thus eventuating in an *authenticity ecosystem*. This *authenticity ecosystem* underpins the four future research directions, which offer benefits in various areas.

First, the identification of specific areas paves the way for a more robust knowledge of authenticity in events, that addresses recent consumer trends as well as current social issues and dilemmas. As Mair and Smith (2021) suggest, a lot of previous studies have demonstrated how events can be more sustainable, resulting in heightened awareness of the negative impacts of events and some advances in legislation to help support this. In more recent times however, there has been increased discussion hinting at using authenticity as a vehicle to promote social sustainability.

Second, the proposed research directions can guide future research exploring how destinations can benefit from authenticity-centred event agendas that are aligned with local resources and communities. The intensified competition between destinations coupled with the continuous evolution of tourists' preferences for more tailored and authentic experiences has led to a stronger focus on how destinations can enhance their competitive position (Abreu Novais, Ruhanen, & Arcodia, 2016; Lee et al., 2021). This is even more pertinent in current times as most destinations tackle the effects of a variety of crises and disasters. While events have been identified as powerful tools to achieve differentiation (Getz & Page, 2016) they have not typically been part of integrated destination development nor strategically chosen according to destination needs and characteristics (Van Niekerk, 2017). Therefore, addressing the four proposed directions can lead to a clearer understanding of how authenticity can be at the centre of event strategies that are focused on communities and the benefits for them.

In addition, the reflections incorporated in this review can be useful to a variety of event stakeholders involved in the multiple stages of the management of events and destinations. For destination managers local governments defining event agendas, the discussion of authenticity is significant so that the events chosen can reflect the identities of the communities hosting them and that the events contribute to the well-being and the sustainability of the local community. Decision-makers must understand the *authenticity ecosystem* where events are located and operated, and how to maintain and strengthen it, so that the benefits of event portfolios can be maximised. For event organisers, understanding authenticity and its dimensions is relevant for the creation of the event experiences that meet consumer expectations, for the identification of sponsors with a good fit with the event, for the management of potential negative impacts of events to the local community. Ultimately, embracing authenticity can lead to more successful events and socially sustainable destinations.

This study is not without its limitations. Similar to other reviews, the main limitation relates to the fact that the sources included for the analysis consisted of publications only in the English language. Unlike other reviews however, this one extended the inclusion criteria to refereed conference papers and book chapters, thus enhancing the efforts to fully capture the academic discourse on the topic. Additionally, the first ten articles included in the review were subject to consistency checks by the research team, thus mitigating concerns related to the potential subjectivity in the coding practices of systematic literature reviews (Le et al., 2019; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017).

Author contributions

Truc H. Le was responsible for the overall conception, construction, of the paper. This includes constructing the framework, developing the first draft and rewriting subsequent drafts of the paper. Margarida Abreu Novais and Charles Arcodia were responsible for developing the first draft, revising and editing drafts of the paper. Ralph Berchtenbreiter and Andreas Humpe were responsible for revising and editing drafts of the paper. Nicole Nguyen was the Research Assistant for the project and responsible for collecting and analysing data. All authors contributed to the robustness of the conceptual directions and ensured the comprehensiveness and the highest quality of the paper.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Truc H. Le: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Margarida Abreu Novais:** Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Charles Arcodia:** Funding acquisition, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Ralph Berchtenbreiter:** Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing. **Andreas Humpe:** Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing. **Nicole Nguyen:** Formal analysis.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2024.101222.

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