

# Adapting Service Design Thinking to Local Festivals

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Successful festivals can have many local benefits. However, most of the time this is not the case. A lot of local festivals are unpopular and a waste of tax money. To shift the focus of festivals from the organisers' needs and purposes to considering all users and stakeholders, service design thinking might provide useful opportunities. Through a literature review and deductive content analysis, three service design methods were proposed as guidelines for improved local festival planning: 1) deep understanding of target groups in the early planning stage, 2) building mutual trust with local stakeholders, 3) establishing stories of the region, and 4) utilising prototyping tools.

**Keywords:** *Local festival, Service design thinking, Event management*

## 1 Introduction

Local festivals are often utilised as tools for supporting local economies and communities. The success of local festivals can bring economic, social, and promotional benefits (Derrett, 2003; Okech, 2011; Shin, 2004). However, planning successful local festivals is not easy.

Many local festivals are criticized for indistinct themes and wasting taxpayers' money; examples of failed cases can be found across the world. For example, Korean municipalities conducted local festivals to encourage the local economy, spending 1,545 billion Korean Won (approximately \$1.3 billion) in the last five years in Korea (Kang, 2017). However, many festivals were unpopular and have been criticised for, again, wasting taxpayers' money. According to Carlsen, *et al* (2010), local festivals in Sweden lack unique selling points for differentiation and competitive advantage.

Viability, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of festivals have become big challenges in event management (Andersson & Getz, 2008). Accordingly, the event management field including local festival planning, explores other values to improve the problems with local festivals. Traditionally, organisers' purposes, budgets, and market situations are considered the main drives for the event management process (Chungbookilbo, 2018; Kim, 2011; Dowson & Bassett, 2015). Recently, however, event management has realized that the participants' experiences and stakeholders' relationships are important factors for planning successful festivals (Pope, Isely & Agbetunsin, 2017; Axelsen & Swan, 2010; Andersson & Gertz, 2008). The new perspectives are very similar to those pursued by service design,

providing opportunities to utilize the knowledge of service design in the event management area.

Service design is a discipline that focuses highly on users' needs and stakeholders' relationships. Services are invisible, intangible products, making user-centeredness and co-creativity important considerations in the design process. Since the principles of service design and event management share these important aspects, comparing the two fields can give valuable insights into making event management more user- and stakeholder-oriented. Some scholars who have seen the opportunity for service design in the event management field have attempted to apply some methods of service design to event management (Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009; Zehrer, 2009; Moscardo 2017). However, the values of service design focusing on local festival planning in particular have been little investigated.

Therefore, this research focuses on identifying the service design requirements for proposing a more people-centred planning method for local festivals. Three research aims were formulated: 1) to identify the requirements shared by service design and event management, 2) to compare and contrast of micro-level requirements in local service design and local festival planning, and 3) to discover opportunities to adapt service design to local festival planning.

To accomplish the aims presented above, a literature review and deductive content analysis were conducted. Firstly, the requirements shared by service design and event management were identified from literature to be used as a priori coding scheme. Subsequently, micro-level requirements within each priori codes were coded by open-coding. Finally, each requirement between local service design and local festival planning were compared and contrasted. Based on these, the study provides opportunities to adopt service design thinking in local festival planning.

## **2 Literature review**

A local festival is an event intended to boost the local economy and create an image of the region (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). The goal of local festivals is to vitalize the local region; festivals are usually conducted by local governments or organizations. The process of planning a local festival includes cooperating with heterogeneous stakeholders such as residents, local businesses, technical experts, and government (Woo, Kim & Nam 2019).

Academically, local festival planning belongs in the field of event management in tourism and hospitality, having characteristics of event management in the tourism field and a singularity in dealing with specific local issues. To understand local festival planning at a macro level, a literature review was conducted on local festival planning and event management. Also, a research gap was investigated through previous studies that have attempted to utilise service design concepts for local festival planning or event management.

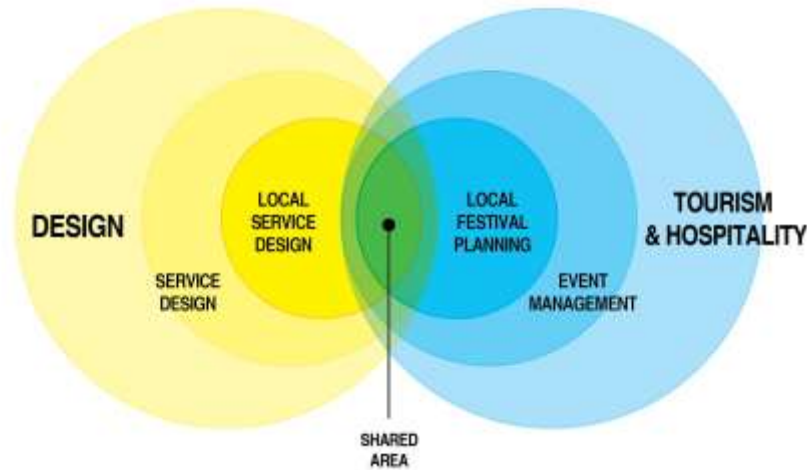


Figure 1. A conceptual diagram of local festival planning and local service

## 2.1 Local festival planning as service design

Service design is a tool to innovate or improve existing services and make them more desirable and usable, encouraging simultaneous effectiveness and efficiency. Researchers define service design as “a practice that generally results in the design of systems and process aimed at providing a holistic service to the user” (The Copenhagen Institute of interaction design, 2008) and “design thinking as applying methodologies and approaches of design to a broader set of issues and problems in business and society” (Tim Brown, 2008).

Event management deals with different aspects of events, such as economic benefits, social impacts, attendees’ motivation, attendees’ satisfaction, and so on (Getz & Page, 2016; Dowson & Bassett, 2015). Since event management has recently shifted to dealing with people-centred, social, and economic issues for planning more successful local festivals, the holistic approach of service design might be useful to event management.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the importance of people’s experience is the rising issue in the event management area. Traditionally, the most important part of event management was economic benefit. However, this perspective has changed. Getz (2008) and Backman (2017), scholars of the event management field, stress the importance of experience in events. Experiences are becoming more important in evaluating participant satisfaction or the success of events or services. Since service design means carefully considering a user’s experience, service design tools can be effectively utilised in the event management field.

Among diverse events, local festivals have special value to local economies. Local festivals can foster growth for local businesses and communities and encourage residents to continue to live in the city by promoting local patriotism, which can be advantageous to local businesses and reshape the image of a city (Okech, 2011). Therefore, considering local people’s needs and relationships is necessary to lead local development the right way. Service design also has social value pertaining to local issues; service design tools can be effectively utilised in local community development and government activities. For example, IDEO, a design consulting firm, helps local people in need by making practical products that utilise service design tools (Chou, 2018). This case shows that service design tools can be used to collect and effectively reflect residents’ needs.

Likewise, an opportunity for service design applied to local festival planning is observed. Service design can deal with diverse problems and issues and provides effective tools and methods to contribute to society. However, research about how service design can help meet the objectives of local festivals is not conducted enough. Therefore, to get a holistic understanding of service design values for local festival planning, cases in both service design and event management are analysed.

## **2.2 Shared requirements for event management and service design**

Event management and service design share some requirements for the creation of a successful event or service. The following four requirements revealed by the literature review were used as the priori coding scheme in the deductive content analysis.

### **2.2.1 Understanding the target group**

The first requirement shared by both domains is understanding the target group. Both service design and event management consider target groups and have developed tools for understanding them. Service design targets users who are likely to use the services, and event management targets attendees who are likely to visit events. The event management perspective requires understanding the attendees' demographics and motivations for attending festivals and/or making repeated visits (Dowson, 2010; Shanka, 2004). Likewise, service design is inherently user-centred, developing services by meeting users' needs. It is emphasised that services should be experienced through the users' eyes (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011). Therefore, service design requirements focus on a genuine understanding of users so that designers can understand the users' current problems and how to solve them (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011).

### **2.2.2 Considering relationships between stakeholders**

The second requirement shared by both domains is considering relationships between stakeholders. Both service design and event management encourage understanding and considering relationships between stakeholders. In event management, stakeholder management leads to the success of events, as higher involvement of stakeholders in planning leads to competitive events (Reid, 2011). Hence, event managers should understand and meet the needs of stakeholders to induce their involvement and cooperation. In service design, stakeholder mapping is mainly used to identify the key stakeholders and their relationships. It is used to discover positive stakeholders to involve in the design process and the risks associated with negative stakeholders (Curedale, 2018). Thus, both service design and event management consider their stakeholders to discover positive resources or potential risks in the planning phase.

### **2.2.3 Creating experiences**

The third requirement found in both service design and event management is creating experiences for people. Experience is a service process consisting of certain touchpoints (Stickdorn, 2009; Lane, 2007). Event management literature stresses the importance of experiences in planning events. For example, Geus, Richards, and Toepoel (2016) mentioned that unique, memorable experiences can be the competitive advantage of events. Likewise, unique experiences can be a powerful selling point in service design. In order to satisfy user expectations, service design encompasses many tools for understanding users and defining service touchpoints of users (Stickdorn, 2009). To sum up, both service design and event management perspectives focus on developing experiences created by services or events for competitiveness.

### 2.2.4 Receiving feedback for an iterative process

The last requirement found in both areas is receiving feedback for an iterative process. Services and events are not one-off occurrences; both are repeatedly used or held, so the designers and planners can collect feedback to improve the next time. According to Stickdorn and Zehrer (2009), the competitiveness of services ultimately depends on the user's satisfaction, which is determined by the user's assessment. In many event management studies, questionnaires are used to discover attendees' motivations for attending events (Dodd, Yuan, Adams & Kolyesnikova, 2005; Shanka & Tayler, 2004; Li & Petrick, 2005). In that regard, a commonality between the two areas is that they both assess the satisfaction of people and use this assessment for the next event or service.

### 3 Deductive content analysis

In this study, deductive content analysis was used to analyse data. Deductive content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) is used to validate or conceptually extend a theoretical framework or theory; for this study, it was used to find differences and commonalities between service design and event management for local regions based on reviewing related literature. The analysis was conducted by three experienced design researchers with different backgrounds in user experience design and service design. Content analysis was carried out in three steps: 1) defining priori codes, 2) extraction from cases based on the priori coding scheme, and 3) grouping and comparing. This research model is illustrated in Figure 2.

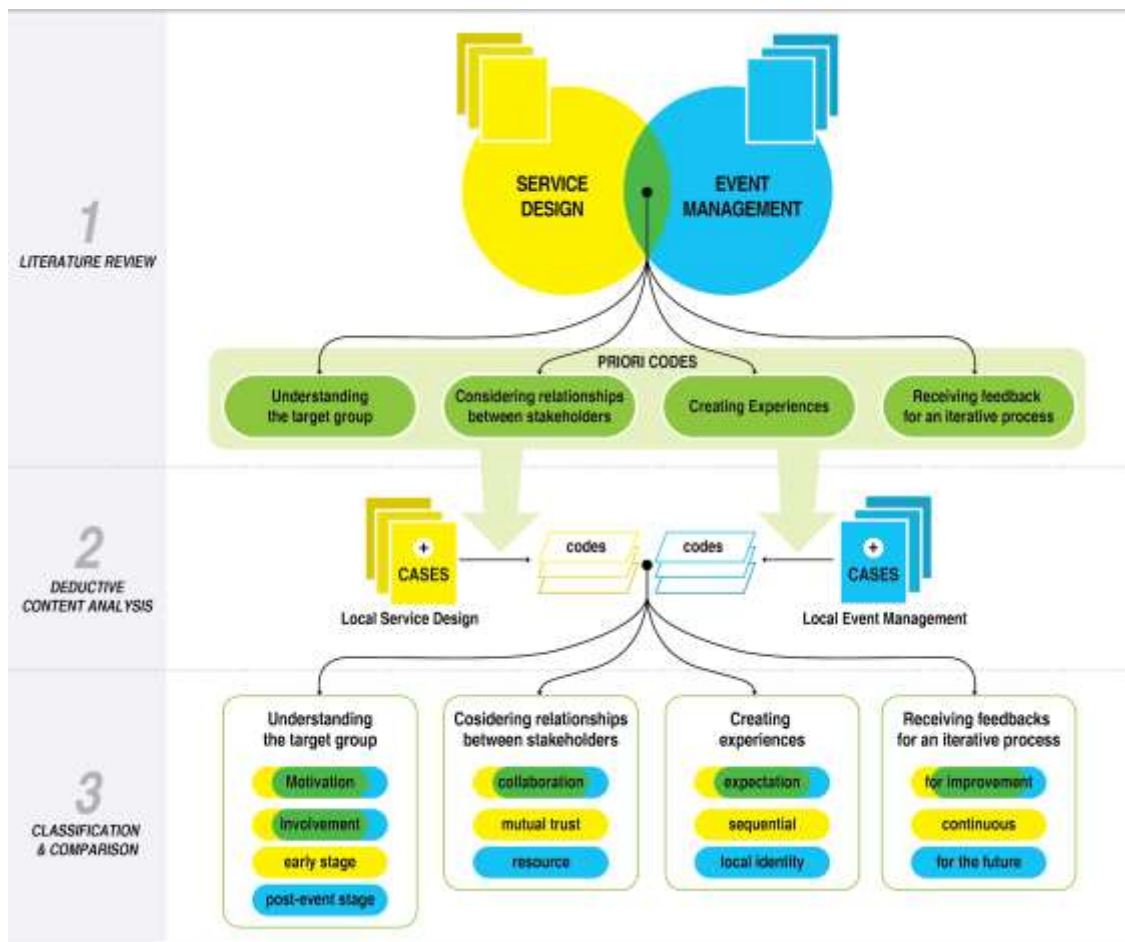


Figure 2. The research model of deductive content analysis

### **3.1 Step 1. Defining priori codes**

Literature on the basic principles of service design and event management was reviewed to define essential requirements in creating successful services and events. For service design, four academic papers and two books indexed as SSCI (Social Science Citation Index) or cited more than 100 times were reviewed. The journals and books cited more than 600 times were considered major theories. For event management in tourism and hospitality, four academic papers and one book that had been indexed as SSCI or cited more than 100 times were reviewed. The principles introduced in the journals and books that had been cited more than 1900 times were considered leading theories.

Based on the open coding, a total of 46 codes were extracted: 19 in service design and 27 in event management of tourism. A commonality in the literature of the two areas emerged; for example, Stickdorn & Schneider (2011) introduced the importance of understanding customers and stakeholders in the principles of service design thinking, and event management in tourism and hospitality has similar ideas. Getz (2008) said that “experiences should be conceptualised and studied in terms of three interrelated dimensions: what people are doing, or behaviour, their emotions, moods, or attitudes, and cognition.”

As a result, four requirements shared by service design and event management were deducted: 1) understanding the target group, 2) considering the relationships between stakeholders, 3) creating experiences, and 4) receiving feedback for an iterative process. The first three requirements belong to the preparation phase for the event or service and the last requirement falls within the post-event or service phase. The requirements are used as priori codes.

### **3.2 Step 2. Extraction from cases based on the priori coding scheme**

To define the sub-codes, more research papers dealing with actual local festival planning cases were collected. For service design, seven cases related to the local region, local economy, and tourism were selected. For local festival planning, 23 cases about local festivals were selected. The reason the actual cases were considered was to define how the conceptual theories were applied in practical fields. While the service design area is theoretically well-developed, local festival planning is more focused on empirical studies. Therefore, more cases of local festival planning were collected.

The service design cases considered how service design can provide beneficial effects in the local economy and tourism; for example, developing a critical perspective on design-led urban regeneration (Bell & Jayne, 2003), how co-design and co-production could support community development (Lam, Zamenopoulos, Kelemen & Hoo, 2017), and managing service touchpoints to increase users' satisfaction in tourism (Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009).

The local festival planning cases mainly focused on encouraging people to visit local festivals and managing stakeholders. Researchers investigated festivals that had established attendees' motivation and factors that attract attendees' interest in attending future events as well as festivals (Shanka & Taylor, 2004), that functioned as sustainable attractions while fulfilling their social and cultural roles at the community level and maintaining political and tangible support from key stakeholders (Andersson & Gertz, 2008).

The literature collected in step 1 was also reviewed to search for codes and tools belonging to each area. The codes and tools from the literature were extracted based on the priori codes found in step 1. Subsequently, 83 codes in service design and 125 codes in local





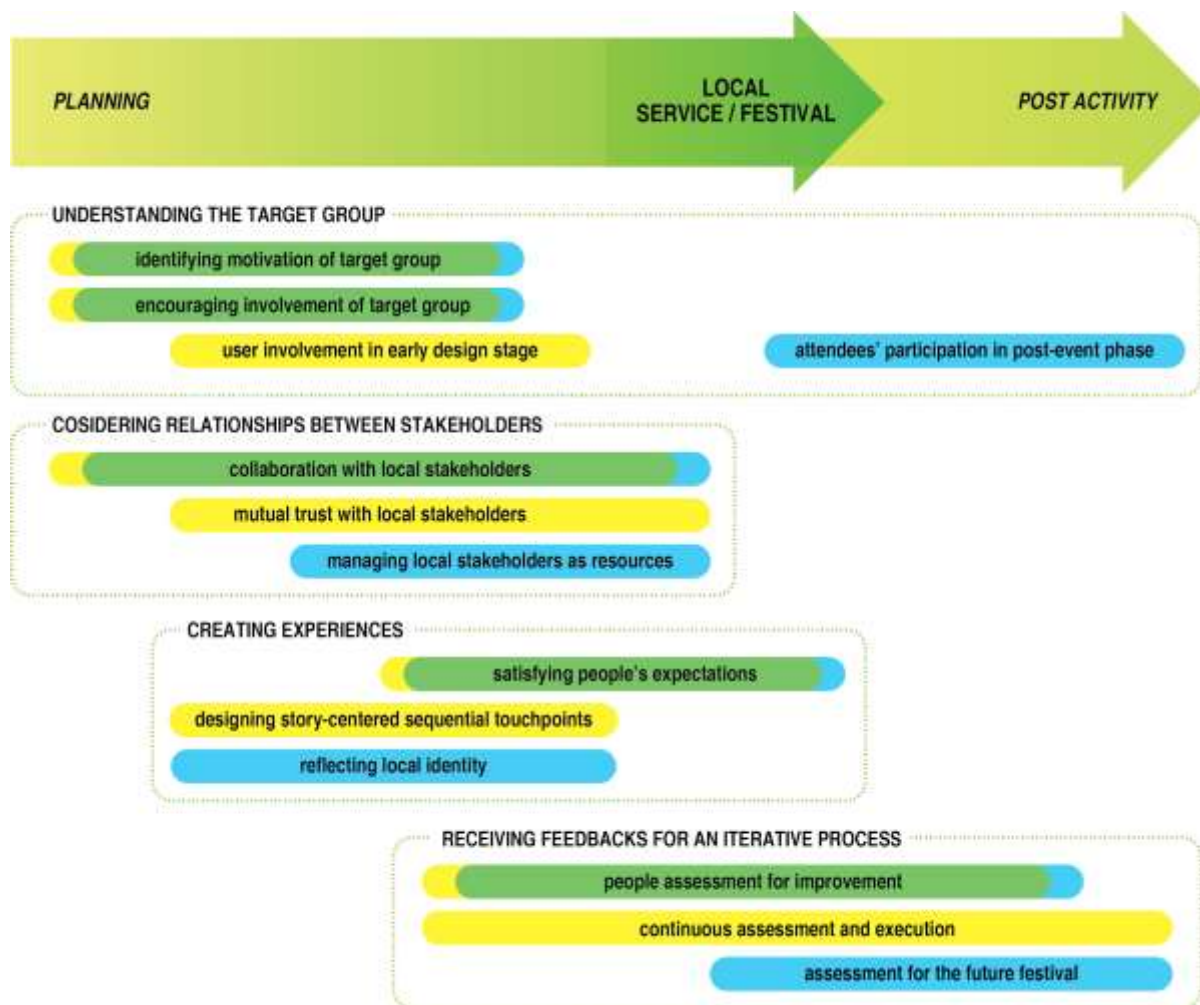


Figure 4. The sub-codes placed in the phase of local service & festival

#### 4.1 Understanding the target group

Understanding the target group is the first shared requirement for service design and event management. In terms of this requirement, two commonalities and two contrasting characteristics were identified in local service design and local festival planning.

First, identifying motivation of the target group is a common sub-code in both local service design and local festival planning. Investigating attendees' interest is particularly meaningful in the competitive local festival area. The motivations of attendees are mostly about fulfilling expected experiences at a particular event; for instance, relaxation, socialisation, entertainment, and family togetherness (Dodd *et al.*, 2006). The user's satisfaction (created by the user's assessment of expectations in certain services) can help to establish the competitiveness of service. Since local festivals are held in various regions, identifying attendees' motivations to travel to different regions is crucial.

Another common sub-code is encouraging involvement of the target group. As mentioned, involving users or attendees is an essential activity to understand their motivation. However, there is a difference in the shared sub-code of the two domains. User involvement in the early design stage is a sub-code discovered in local service design that focuses on understanding users' needs in the pre-service phase (development of a service). Design



activities with local people are commonly conducted to understand specific local issues. This activity means defining and applying the local users' expectations before they experience the local service, and a user-participatory design is commonly used as a method. The co-design approach was perceived as empowering because it helps to identify a number of important insights that non-locals do not know.

Attendees' participation in post-event phase is a sub-code discovered in local festival planning. Local festival planning generally concentrates on activities in the post-event phase to understand attendees' motivations; post-event surveys are the easiest, most common method for this activity. The questionnaire includes items addressing people's motivations for attending events and whether the event attributes satisfied attendees' expectations. It implies that attendees' assessments of events are significant in local festival planning activities, as these evaluations are a good way of showing others (e.g. clients, sponsors, and partners) that the local festival was a success, which can ultimately help to justify future events (Dowson & Bassett, 2015). Consequently, the phases and objective of understanding target audiences are different.

#### **4.2 Considering the relationships between stakeholders**

Considering the relationships between stakeholders is the second shared requirement for service design and event management. In terms of this requirement, one commonality and two contrasting characteristics were identified in local service design and local festival planning.

Collaboration with local stakeholders is a common sub-code in local service design and local festival planning. Both local festival planning and service design require a broader stakeholder management perspective. Collaboration is an effective method for community development, as it encourages all key stakeholders to work together to create appropriate output that reflects their needs and expectations and prevents conflicts of interest. Thus, the role of festival organisers or service designers is crucial in developing a supportive network and managing stakeholders' relationships to build the legitimacy of a local festival or service and fulfil multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Mutual trust with local stakeholders is a sub-code discovered in local service design. Service design requires consideration of diverse stakeholders in creating a shared vision for change or a shared approach for problem-solving. It is important to help all local stakeholders understand and respect each other; this allows them to create a shared vision and a shared approach for problem-solving in a region. Defining problems together allows a mutual trust to develop between them. Local service design initiates the management of stakeholders by building empathy between stakeholders and organisers.

Managing local stakeholders as resources is a sub-code discovered in local festival planning. Local festival planning additionally considers stakeholders from the perspective of resource management. Some festivals exhibited extensive cooperation with a wide selection of local agents or stakeholders, but the range of difficulties of this cooperation building and relationship management were clear. To moderate the circumstances, an event organizer can become a decision-maker and a conductor. In other words, local festival planning occasionally uses top-down approaches to manage resources efficiently.

### **4.3 Creating experiences**

Creating experiences is the third shared requirement for service design and event management. In terms of this requirement, one commonality and two contrasting characteristics were identified in local service design and local festival planning.

Satisfying people's expectations is a common sub-code in service design and local festival planning. Creating experiences starts with understanding and satisfying the expectations of attendees, as mentioned above. If the desired expectation of a local service or festival specifically matches the actual experience, people will be satisfied and have more memorable experiences; if people enjoy the local service or festival, they will consider to visit the region again.

Designing story-centred sequential touchpoints is a sub-code discovered in local service design. Service design emphasises the sequence of service to create valuable experiences. Service flow is crucial to consider when designing services, as the rhythm of service influences the mood of users. Sequentially designed touchpoints are like an interesting movie that keeps the audience entertained. Story-centred touchpoints encourage people to be mindful of the local region based on the stories. Service design must not only make clear connections between locations and experiences but also be consistent in supporting the unfolding story or the underlying narrative theme.

Reflecting local identity is a sub-code discovered more frequently in local festival planning. Reflecting on local culture and identity is significantly valuable events are used to represent the place or culture, like selling the identity or culture as a product. Festivals representing local characteristics and culture generate interesting tourism experiences for attendees.

### **4.4 Receiving feedback on an iterative process**

Receiving feedback on an iterative process is the last shared requirement for service design and event management. In terms of this requirement, one commonality and two contrasting characteristics were identified in local service design and local festival planning.

People assessment for improvement is a common sub-code in local service design and local festival planning. Local services are usually consistently operated. Although local festivals look temporary, they are conducted every set period. Hence, both local service design and local festival planning look for ways to operate more sustainably. Both domains receive audiences' feedback to improve services or events.

However, there is a difference in the objective of each domain. Continuous assessment and execution are a sub-code discovered in local service design. Service designers usually receive feedback for local services being developed or enacted. Since local services target limited populations, listening to users is crucial to maintaining sustainability.

Assessment for the future festival is a sub-code discovered in local festival planning. While service designers often conduct user assessments in every service phase, event planners usually receive attendees' opinions after the event and apply those opinions to future events. This is because local festivals are too short to apply attendees' opinions in the middle of the event, and chaotic situations can occur without enough guidance.

## **5 Discussion**

Although local festival planning already shares many aspects with local service design, some perspectives and approaches are different. This study focused on opportunities for local festival planning to adopt perspectives, methods, and tools from service design thinking.

### **5.1 Deep understanding of target groups in early-planning stages**

Service design utilises diverse tools and methods to understand users in the early service design stage. On the contrary, post-event activities are more frequent in local festival planning. There is a practical reason why local festival planning commonly focuses more on surveys in the post-event phase; the success of local festival planning is judged through surveys, which is the easiest, most effective way. The results of the survey can help form a standard of judgment as to whether the festival is economically valuable. Thus, if results fall short of expectations, the festival may not be held again. Therefore, understanding target attendees in the pre-event stage can help the festival achieve higher scores in the post-event surveys.

Various useful methods to understand people exist in service design. Among them, participatory design is an effective method to gain a deep understanding of users and is commonly used in service design. Many design studies have demonstrated that engaging people is an effective method in public matters (Crivellaro et al., 2014; Teng, 2014). However, it is difficult for people to process the tremendous scale of a whole local festival plan. The organiser can get meaningful ideas by filtering rough ideas iteratively so that only the strongest, most resonant ones are developed. Consequently, the planner can design the festival effectively to satisfy people's expectations through the process of understanding target attendees.

### **5.2 Building mutual trust with local stakeholders**

Building mutual trust is an important issue in service design; local festival planning should not only consider attendees but also local communities and stakeholders. Occasionally, stakeholders have conflicting interests. For example, a local festival might make a region overcrowded or festival attendees might pollute the surrounding environment. Therefore, collaborating with all stakeholders is necessary to create a shared vision and understand and respect each other.

Moreover, active members of local communities know that unexpected issues can occur. There are cases in which listening to stakeholders' opinions led to successful results (Chou, 2018); thus, by letting local citizens and stakeholders participate in the process of planning a local festival, organisers can consider local needs and help the local economy.

Nevertheless, managing stakeholders as resources is still a considerable task, and some conflicts between stakeholders are hard to resolve under limited budgets. Therefore, finding a balance between them helps to establish an economical and competitive local festival.

### **5.3 Establishing stories of the region**

Managing touchpoints is essential for service design—the user experience consists of certain touchpoints, which can be considered puzzle pieces of the service; the puzzle pieces should be connected to form a picture of the whole service. Drawing a service picture is like writing a story, and the whole service can provide users with consistent, unique experiences.

Reflecting local identity and stories in festival planning is important. Local festival planning can easily utilise the stories of the region's customs, residents' ethnic backgrounds, and unique cultural heritage. Background stories about the region and local festival can encourage valuable experiences and form a unique aspect of a festival; for example, La Tomatina in Spain and Palio di Siena in Italy. Applying the local identity is usually an influential method to encourage more attendees in the competitive festival market.

However, there are successful local festival planning cases that make their own stories and identities unrelated to the local regions, such as Santa Claus village in Finland. Saint Nicholas, the historic basis for Santa Claus, was not born in Finland but Turkey. A new identity for a local region can be built by composing a powerful story in local festival planning. Thus, if a historical identity is not enough to build a unique festival concept, a festival planner can create a story or identity to support the whole theme of the festival.

#### **5.4 Utilising prototyping tools**

In service design, designers collect users' opinions in the middle of planning or service processes to improve services over time. To test the results of user discussions, prototypes are utilised as effective means to convey knowledge and progress toward an outcome. The prototypes enable planners to explore, evaluate, and understand the possibilities and limitations of a design idea in the simplest and most efficient way (Lim, Stolterman & Tenenberg, 2008). When local festival planners collaborate with local people without knowledge of festival design, prototyping can help them easily explore ideas.

The relationships between local stakeholders are varied depending on each event, meaning that the process of planning local festivals cannot be simply standardized or unified. If service design tools for prototyping apply to local festival planning, event planners and local governments can easily discover difficulties and solutions before conducting the festival. Moreover, event planners and local governments can ideate the concepts of a local festival and communicate in a more efficient way.

#### **5.5 Limitation and further research**

This study provides for the possibility of adapting service design thinking to local festival planning. The limitation of this study is that the results were developed by a theoretical approach only. The study is based on a literature review and content analysis, meaning that not all specific practical application approaches were validated. Hence, to complement this limitation, possible future studies can focus on establishing more guidelines for practitioners in the field of local festival planning and validating the guidelines by performing empirical studies.

### **6 Conclusion**

This study represents an investigation of the opportunity to adopt service design thinking to achieve more success in local festivals. Through literature review and deductive content analysis, the shared areas between service design and local festival planning are revealed.

Four requirements (piori codes) for successful services and events were found: 1) understanding target groups, 2) considering relationships between stakeholders, 3) creating experiences, and 4) receiving feedback for an iterative process. Second, using the priori codes, sub-requirements (sub-codes) for local services and festivals were extracted. Lastly,

these were classified and compared to find similarities and differences. These pointed to opportunities to adopt service design thinking in local festival planning.

Four main opportunities were discovered to use service design thinking in local festival planning: 1) deep understanding of target groups in the early planning stage, 2) building mutual trust with local stakeholders, 3) establishing stories of the region, and 4) utilising prototyping tools. All can contribute to creating better experiences at local festivals by encouraging the involvement of all parties. However, there should be more guidelines for local festival planners to successfully adopt service design thinking in their processes.

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