Strategic Thinking and the Creative Process in Event Management

by

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Abstract

This research examines strategic thinking and the creative processes at work in event management. The event industry in Melbourne, Australia provides the setting for the research. This sector, like many others, faces ongoing challenges. Traditionally events are regarded as tactical or operational through their unique and short-term nature (Goldblatt, 1997). However, the sector is evolving to meet the changing needs of audiences, consumers and other stakeholders (Harris R., Jago, Allen, & Huyskens, 2000; Getz, 2000b). Traditional creative communications media such as film and television are evolving and restructuring (Howard, 2006). Commercial advertising and other marketing communications media are fragmenting as consumer choice expands (Webster, 2005). Experiential and interactive forms of communication are gaining preference (Petkus, 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The event sector has an opportunity to assert itself within this changing framework alongside facing holistic social, economic and environmental challenges (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005).

Addressing these changes and challenges requires a strategic and creative context to shift current thinking and envision alternatives (Graetz, 2002; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Heracleous, 1998; Liedtka, 1998; Mintzberg, 1994; Näsi, 1991). Furthermore, while events are seen as a creative form of communication there has been no empirical research investigating the
creative process in event management. This background forms the research question posed in this thesis (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’

The themes and issues within the three parent literatures of strategic thinking, the creative process and event management are reviewed and a theoretical framework developed. The research is exploratory in nature, adopting an interpretive paradigm, focused on building knowledge from an understanding of existing perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A qualitative methodology has been adopted using an ethnographic journey through event management in Melbourne. Exploratory depth interviews in the sector explore and refine the theoretical framework and a longitudinal case study with participant observation is subsequently used to investigate the research issues. An empirical model evolves from the conceptual framework in order to answer the research question.

Keywords: Event management, strategic thinking, creative process
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to parents everywhere who provide the kind of upbringing I was privileged to enjoy. To those parents who, like my own and like Louisa, my partner and mother to our daughter, provide you with the skills and the confidence to follow your own way.

To those parents who wait patiently and nervously in the wings in support of your latest ‘venture’. Be it the curious role in the school play, your odd choice of undergraduate study or the decision to explore strange lands armed only with a backpack. To those parents who do this while all the time bravely concealing the horror and confusion that must be simmering beneath.

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To Mum, Dad and Loulou.
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Preface

Consider for a moment your first live event.

Perhaps it was a music concert, festival or visit to the theatre. How did it feel to you? I doubt you have forgotten it. These feelings are universal. We all experience them. They are timeless. Each new generation feels the same way. There is nothing quite like it.

The motivation behind writing this thesis was based on this belief in the power of events. This has driven me to invest time in participating and observing the way in which the events sector is evolving and responding to new challenges.

During this time I have developed a strong view about the industry and where I felt it was heading. This has led to ‘hunches’ based around some simple observations. The first observation is the power of ‘live’ to engage people. As we know from our own first ‘event’, there is something basic and powerful in the togetherness of a live experience. Part of that experience is the creative process required on both the part of the audience and the part of the organisers to assign meaning to the experience one is having. Organisers and audiences perceive events as creative and emotional. The second observation is that despite wielding this creative and emotional
power, there is something missing. What do we know about the creative process and how is it applied to meet the challenges faced in event management? The industry has been traditionally perceived as a tactical and operational community of ‘party planners’. How does this view align with the higher motives of creativity, togetherness and emotion?

Something seems to have evolved in the thinking of those who engage with events. Corporate organisations now see the value of creating ‘live brand experiences’ to emotionally connect with their customers. Budgets have shifted from increasingly fragmenting media such as television towards spend on events. Governments now recognise the political, social and economic value of hosting ‘mega events’ such as Olympic and Commonwealth Games, World Cups and Grand Prix. Locally they have seen how events are a device for engaging communities, celebrating diversity and injecting life into regional development. Festivals have grown exponentially with a ‘boutique’ program to suit every taste, orientation and age range. As Generation X has matured and Baby Boomers continue to retire, ‘getting together’ in leisure time is a welcome break from the ‘virtual’ world of work and younger generations. In other words, events are being taken more seriously.
However, despite the emerging perception of events as a serious and valid communications form, the industry itself seems to have struggled to catch up. The cultural, organisational and structural shift required from perceived party planner to live communications solution has not been fully embraced by the sector. The final observation therefore is that there needs to be a marked shift from a tactical and operational perspective of ‘what we do in events’ towards a more strategic and divergent way of thinking. This may enable the sector to respond more effectively to the emergent demands and pressures that come from both being more popular and being taken more seriously.

Events are a creative industry and apply a creative process to event management. Events are the fastest growing sector of the world leisure industry. Events have shifted from having an image problem: low expectations as party planners, to having an ability problem: high expectations while entrenched in old methods.

This thesis is one of exploration based on these hunches. It will explore the creative process in event management and proposes a paradigm shift towards a more divergent and strategically informed approach to meet emergent challenges.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

Organizations and communities need to communicate effectively with each other, their staff, customers and other stakeholders to survive and flourish. One medium of communication is the live event. The event industry, like any other, faces social, financial and environmental challenges (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005). Addressing these challenges requires strategic thinking to consider and envision alternatives (Mintzberg, 1994; Handy, 1999). One key aspect (Ordez De Pablos, Tennyson, & Zhao, 2011) of strategic thinking is the creative process as a way of imagining potential futures different to those of the present (Mintzberg, 1994; Prahalad & Hamel, 1994; Näsi, 1991; Heracleous, 1998; Liedtka, 1998; Graetz, 2002). In the context of events, the theory of event management is formalised within an international body of knowledge or EMBOK (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). While strategic thinking and the creative process are cited as two of the core values within this body of knowledge it remains conceptual. The theory suggests a relationship between strategic thinking and the creative process. However, there is little research of these phenomena in the context of event management. This research addresses that gap.
Societies and businesses are increasingly engaging in events as a popular medium (Petkus, 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The leisure and tourism sector, which includes events, is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (Ordez De Pablos, Tennyson, & Zhao, 2011). Events represent a significant and growing sector of the established infrastructure of creative industries (Cunningham, 2002; Garnham, 2005; Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008). These industries include communications, advertising, film, media and the arts (Caves, 2000; O’Connor, 2007; Hartley J., 2005; Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999). They contribute to the knowledge economy (OECD, 1998; Roodhouse, 2001; Throsby, 2001) through creativity and imaginative intellectual property (Smith E. A., 2001; Howkins, 2002). Creativity is required to extend and adapt current thinking and meet new social and economic challenges (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Fairholm & Card, 2009; Fischer, 2005; Montuori & Purser, 1996; Townley, Beech, & McKinlay, 2009). This thesis explores these strategic and creative issues within the context of event management in Australia.

1.2 Research Question

This research addresses the question: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’
The research is motivated by four observations. First there has been an increase in the popularity of events as a communications medium across a range of commercial and cultural environments (Petkus, 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Secondly, the event industry, its people and organizations are facing the inevitable social, structural and economic challenges present in a growth environment (Getz, 2000a; Harris R., Jago, Allen, & Huyskens, 2000). Thirdly, there is an identified connection between strategic thinking to meet new challenges and divergent, creative thought (Mintzberg, 1994; Liedtka, 1998; Graetz, 2002; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Näsi, 1991). However, there seems to be a lack of strategic thought and direction in event management, evidenced by the absence of literature and empirical research in the area of strategic thinking and the creative process. Further understanding of their application to emergent event management challenges is therefore required.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The structure of this thesis is adapted from the chapter structure originally advocated by Perry (1998). Figure I illustrates the flow of this seven-chapter thesis and is subsequently explained.
Chapter 1 includes an introduction and background to the main topic and research issues, parent literatures and contributions/limitations of the thesis. Chapter 1 also presents definitions for the reader as a reference point to contextualise the terms to event management. Chapter 2 discusses in detail the three parent literatures derived from the extant theory and presents the issues in detail for exploration in the field. Chapter 3 explains the ‘Ethnographic Journey’ of research and justifies the research approach taken, including the philosophical underpinnings of the research design, along with limitations. In chapter 4 the research setting of Melbourne, Australia is explicated alongside its significance and relevance as a study setting for event management research. Chapter 5 is the first of two chapters discussing the results of the ‘Ethnographic Journey’ and is concerned with expressing the diverse views of event managers from the field to ensure all voices are heard. Next, chapter 6 presents the results in themes under the headings of the three research issues highlighted in chapter 1 and explored further in chapter 2. Finally chapter 7 discusses the results in detail in relation to the existing knowledge discussed in chapter 2.
This final chapter concludes with an empirically informed model of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management as well as recommendations for future research.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In investigating the current theory outlined in chapter 2, there are three parent literatures as illustrated in Figure II. First, there is the strategy and in particular strategic thinking literature and how this is applied to meet new challenges. Second, there is the creativity literature, and how the creative process is used to generate useful and appropriate alternatives to the status quo. Finally, there is the event management literature, in particular the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) and how event management is structured to meet current and future challenges.

Figure II. Parent Literatures
1.5 Research Issues

Three research issues have arisen within the framework of these theories. These issues explore event management and in particular the nature of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. The three issues and associated parent literatures are identified in Table A:

Table A. Research Issues and Parent Literatures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Issue</th>
<th>Parent Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI1</td>
<td>Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management. Event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI2</td>
<td>Events are creative experiences and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little research into the characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management. The creative process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI3</td>
<td>Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus. Strategic thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Together these exploratory research issues form the basis of the literature review which helps inform the field research approach and data collection.

1.6 Justification for the Research

The notion of the creative process in a strategic context, specifically in the area of event management provides justification for the original contribution
made by this research. There are implications for researchers in event management as well as event practitioners. First, the implications for researchers are that whilst there have been studies, which confirm a relationship between strategic and creative thinking (Mintzberg, 1994; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Näsi, 1991; Heracleous, 1998; Liedtka, 1998; Graetz, 2002) and research discussing the creativity of events (Garcia, 2010; Chen, 2009; Han, 2012) there is little research relating this specifically to the challenges facing event management. This study contributes greater understanding to strategic thinking and the creative process in the event management context. In terms of research on the nature of creativity there has been no work focusing specifically on the creative process in the context of event management. There is a slender body of knowledge around understanding the creative process in event management (Chen, 2009) and no research to date on how strategic thinking can provide a context for these creative processes.

Second, the implications for practitioners include developing a greater understanding of how event managers can utilise strategic thinking to address sector challenges. This contribution provides insight into how event managers could become more strategic in the development and utilisation of the event concept as a creative communications tool. The creative process is an essential aspect of event management contributing not only in
terms of the effectiveness of the event itself and the motivation of the individuals involved but also to the final live experience of the audience. The model presented in the findings of this thesis can be used as a tool for event management to consider and understand strategic thinking and the creative process in more depth and apply this in practice.

The research agenda for the events sector calls for more investigation into the ways in which event managers can manage their processes more effectively (Harris R., Jago, Allen, & Huyskens, 2000). Recommended research in the field of creativity suggests engaging with practitioners to understand more about the influencing factors of such creativity (Watson, 2007; George, 2007). Therefore more detailed research in the field and in close consultation with practitioners is recommended to develop a credible exploration of the strategic aspects of the creative process in event management. This thesis answers those calls.

1.7 Research Method

Exploring strategic thinking and the creative process in event management requires a process involving all possible stakeholders in the creative process. In order to build upon the theoretical framework of the creative process and to evaluate its application in the context of event managers a next step is required. This step is to explore and understand whether event
managers operationalise the creative process at a tactical level or apply a more strategic level of thinking. As the research is exploratory in nature, a constructivist-interpretive approach is adopted, focused on building knowledge from an understanding of existing perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A qualitative methodology has been adopted within an ethnographic framework (see chapters 3 and 4). This ‘Ethnographic Journey’ takes place over an extended timeframe with a range of data sources consulted. For the purposes of this research, a range of appropriate methods have been adopted to support later triangulation of the data, as follows (Hammersley, 2006; Hine, 2000; Sorenson, 2003):

- Longitudinal immersion in the ‘world’ of the study through ongoing open ended interaction with practitioners in informal settings (to gain a broader perspective and maintain immersion)
- Exploratory semi-structured depth interviews with identified case organisations (to establish industry context)
- Longitudinal study with an identified case organisation (to enable thick descriptions of phenomena).
- Participant observation in the identified longitudinal setting (to observe what people do and say in a specific context)
• Study of documentation from the identified longitudinal setting (planning and strategy documents, websites, communications material, internal memoranda, press releases), (Yin, 2003)

• First semi-structured interviews with subjects in the longitudinal setting (to understand individual perspectives in the lead up to an event)

• Second semi-structured interviews with subjects in the longitudinal setting (to revisit individual perspectives post-event)

This immersive process allows the researcher to gain a ‘thick and deep’ practice based insight into strategic thinking and the creative process in the context of event management. More detail on the research method can be found in chapter 3.

1.8 Definitions

Definitions of terms vary across literature and bodies of knowledge. The following summary definitions are used to briefly describe these terms and set context for the reader. Only the key concepts within the scope of this research are provided. More detailed definitions derived from the broader literature are outlined in chapter 2. Due to the specific nature of the study and its focus on event management, the definitions referred to throughout are in the context of event professionals, event organisations and their key stakeholders and audiences. For example, when discussing the creative
process, this is in the context of the creative process in event management (see section 2.4.3).

1.8.1 Events

The term ‘event’ is used to describe experiences that are staged infrequently and are of short duration (Getz, 2008). Originality and uniqueness are also characteristics of the live event, symbolising a ‘moment in time’ (Goldblatt, 1997). Events are distinguished by their accessibility to the public, often comprising a central theme and with specified dates and times of operation (Getz, 1997). Meetings or events are further described as, ‘a planned communication encounter between two or more persons for a common purpose’. (Hildreth, 1990, p. 1). The Convention Liaison Council and the Joint Industry Council’s definition: ‘A general term indicating the coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. This can be on an ad hoc basis or according to a set pattern’. (Rogers, 1998, p. 17)

1.8.2 Event Management

Event management is broad and considered to be a form of creative project management (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). There are many definitions of the process in the literature and these definitions are also dependent on the type of event being managed. (Rutherford-Silvers,
Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) have consolidated the literature to create a conceptual definition through an event management body of knowledge (EMBOK). In this context, event management is defined as follows: ‘Event management is the process by which an event is planned, prepared, and produced. As with any other form of management, it encompasses the assessment, definition, acquisition, allocation, direction, control, and analysis of time, finances, people, products, services, and other resources to achieve objectives’ (Rutherford-Silvers, 2011). There are five overarching domains in this framework to describe the key components of event management. These domains are designed around the linear, operational steps required to manage an event from concept to execution as follows: administration, design, marketing, operations and risk management. Furthermore, EMBOK highlights what are considered to be the core values of event management. These core values are the business and personal skills viewed as essential to successfully manage and deliver an event. These are: Creativity, Strategic Thinking, Continuous Improvement, Ethics and Integration.

1.8.3 The Event Manager

Although there has been much work in the literature in defining events and event types, less has been written on specific definitions of event managers, (Van der Wagen & Carlos, 2005). Again (Rutherford-Silvers, 2011) provide
a role definition through EMBOK: ‘An event manager’s job is to oversee and arrange every aspect of an event, including researching, planning, organizing, implementing, controlling, and evaluating an event’s design, activities, and production.’ The event sector as a creative industry follows a pattern of high levels of self-employment and project based work (Caves, 2000; Townley, Beech, & McKinlay, 2009). Creative industry workers are defined as ‘diverse, skilled and specialized workers, each bringing personal tastes with regard to the quality or configuration of the product’ (Caves, 2000, p. 5). Event managers in this context are defined as specialists who are commissioned by clients or organizations to conceptualize, design, project-manage, deliver and evaluate live events (Getz, 2008; Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). Event managers can be individuals such as freelance specialists, employees of specialist event management companies or members of the ‘in-house’ event teams of larger organizations.

1.8.4 Strategic Thinking

The purpose of strategic thinking is to ‘discover novel, imaginative strategies which can rewrite the rules of the competitive game and to envision potential futures significantly different from the present’ (Heracleous, 1998, p. 485). This process is seen as divergent, synthetic and creative (Graetz, 2002). Mintzberg (1994) makes a distinction between strategic planning and
strategic thinking. Strategic planning is seen as focused on analysis and formalising the steps of a process to achieve objectives (see also EMBOK in 2.3.3). Strategic thinking is concerned with a more creative, intuitive and holistic view, understanding that the world may not always operate and exist within a linear framework (Mintzberg, 1994; Fairholm & Card, 2009). Organisations and the professionals working with them must adopt a more flexible and responsive approach to external conditions as they adapt to emergent challenges and new, more unpredictable situations (Abrahamson, 1996; Fairholm & Card, 2009; Handy, 1999; Mintzberg, 1994).

1.8.5 The Creative Process

Creativity is defined as the production of ideas that are both novel and useful (Amabile, 1996). To be creative ideas must be seen as having potential to generate relevant and long-term value and advantage for an organization’s various publics (George, 2007; Amabile, 1996; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Creative ideas can relate to a broad range of event organizational outcomes such as the end product or service (event concept), procedures of work (event process) and the organisational structure (event team) (George, 2007). The creative process is the specific subject of investigation in this thesis. The creative prerequisites of novelty and usefulness help to distinguish what is considered creative from what is not creative (George, 2007). However, there exists a dichotomy between
usefulness and originality. What is commercially useful to an organisation may not be creatively original. There may be a tension between industry and culture (Burton, 2009). For example an ‘out there’ creative event concept may not necessarily be useful or appropriate and is therefore not deemed creative. Equally, solving an event problem using a tried and tested method is not novel and as such is also not considered creativity, rather problem solving (Runco, 2004).

1.9 Delimitations of Scope with Justifications

The research framework and the resultant delimitations should be considered. The strategic creative process is unlikely to be identical across different event types. Equally, challenges facing the sector will vary according to political, social, economic and geographical influences. While the research aims to cover a broad range of event types, as represented in the Ethnographic Journey, the context is Melbourne, Australia. Some of the findings may be generalised across other event types, regions and markets but for practical reasons the primary research data are drawn from this specific city and region. Post-doctoral research could consider the application of the thesis findings to the Australia-wide and international events sectors.
Finally, the nature of the research makes it difficult for any method to be utilised full time during the observation or interaction with a particular research subject. The selection of a longitudinal case study allows a deeper participation but inevitably the researcher cannot be present when every strategic or creative moment takes place. This applies in the creative industries and the events sector within it: ‘the social milieu, night life, industry events and in situ interactions emphasise the importance of the social nature of how things get done, raising the basic question of where work takes place’ (Townley, Beech, & McKinlay, 2009, p. 948). This limitation to the research has been recognised and measures have been taken to minimise the influence on data collection and validity (See chapters 3 and chapter 4).

1.10 Summary of Chapter

This introductory chapter began by stating the key issues being dealt with by the study. In summary the research proposes as event management develops and professionalises to meet emergent challenges, divergent, creative, strategic thinking is required. This study investigates in detail strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. The research approach taken is interpretive and qualitative. There is little empirical research of this kind in event management. The creative process plays an important role in the long-term strategic and competitive advantage
of the events industry, as it emerges as one medium of choice in a more participative era. Exploring and analysing strategic thinking and the creative process in event management represents a contribution to knowledge based on calls for more research in this area and raises further questions for future investigation.
2 Literature Review

At its simplest, we celebrate the ‘live’ experience – the hunger written into our DNA that has driven us for millennia to come together as members of the human tribe, around a literal or metaphorical campfire, to tell stories to each other about ourselves and about the world around us. — (Sheehy, 2011)

This quote from the 2011 Melbourne International Arts Festival encapsulates the sentiment reflected in the literature that is central to the argument of this thesis. The literature provides evidence that events have significance (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Goldblatt, 2002; Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005). The human need to gather, communicate and celebrate is at the heart of what events provide. In this context events are a creative and experiential medium (Garcia, 2010; Chen, 2009) Event management is the process by which human gatherings are facilitated (see also definitions in section 2.3). In a contemporary context this also relates to the cultural, economic and social implications of such gatherings.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the literature as it relates to the research question:

‘(RQ) How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event
management?’ The chapter addresses the research problem and presents emergent research issues through an explication of the literature.

The structure of this chapter is detailed in Figure III.

**Figure III. Chapter 2 Structure**

Following the introduction (section 2.1), the significance of the study is established by outlining the role of events in society (section 2.2). Next, three parent literatures are discussed in the context of the research problem. The first parent literature explored is event management (see section 2.3), including a definition of event management for the purposes of this thesis, building on the extant theory. The second parent literature concerns the creative process (see section 2.4). Understanding more about the creative process from current theory will identify research issues related to the creative process in event management (Amabile, Arsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Lubart, 2001; Wallas, 1926). The creative process is defined for the study. The final parent literature discusses and defines strategic thinking (see section 2.5). The literature on strategic thinking is considered in this context through its possible influence on the creative process in event management, as proposed in the research problem (Handy, 1999;
Mintzberg, 1994). This context and the parent literatures are consolidated in section 2.6 to introduce and explain the research issues arising from the literature. Section 2.7 concludes the chapter and consolidates the study context, parent literatures and resultant research issues through a conceptual model, with justifications, to elucidate the issues raised and to be explored in this thesis. This framework provides an insight into the theoretical underpinnings of the study, enabling focus on the subsequent data collection and analysis in the field (see Chapter 3).

2.2 The Significance of Events

This section of the thesis introduces and explains the significance of events as it is presented in the broader literature. The cultural, economic and social significance of events is presented. As events are a creative communications form, this significance is further explored through an analysis of social trends in communications. Finally the significance of events as detailed in the literature is summarised before moving on to the specific parent theory of event management in section 2.3.

2.2.1 The Cultural, Economic and Social Significance of Events.

The literature review identifies that events have significant cultural, economic and social impact (see also Event Civilisation in section 2.3.2). Embedding the study of the event in the social milieu is an integral part of
In terms of evaluating the cultural, economic and social contribution of events, the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is cited as the main device for considering their value and impact (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005; Sherwood, 2007; Hede A. M., 2008). TBL originated in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature (Elkington, 1994). Much of the literature on these effects is associated with the connection between events and tourism, i.e. how hosting an event will generate social and economic impacts for the host location. (Burns, Hatch, & Mules, 1986) presented a pioneer study of the Adelaide Grand Prix examining the tangible and non-tangible impacts of event tourism. The study concluded that financial gain through increased tourism numbers was complemented by other, non-financial contributions termed ‘psychic income’. This embraced ephemeral commodities such as general excitement and good opinions of one’s self as an audience member or part of a host community (Sherwood, 2007). Sherwood proposes a more holistic approach to considering the economic impact of events (Sherwood, Jago, & Deery, 2005). However, there is no cluster of measures enabling consideration of all the performance indicators for an event. Some have economic value, such as the TBL. Some have social value. Others have cultural value. While events have multiple impacts, the value of these impacts is difficult to measure holistically and to evaluate over time (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005). In terms of the economic contributions of events an extensive
investigation of the extant literature reveals little or no data to substantiate the broad event sector in Australia in dollar terms. The Australian business events sector, also defined as Meetings Incentives Conference Exhibitions or MICE (Stokes, 2003), (see also section 2.3.4.2) has published figures on its economic contribution. Business events expenditure in 2002/2003 totalled $17.3 billion, with a direct contribution to employment of 214,000 jobs (Deery M., Jago, Fredline, & Dwyer, 2005). The 'Business Events Triangle' (Jago & Deery, 2011, p. 8) incorporates a number of economic variables such as delegate and non-delegate expenditure as well as more qualitative event impacts such as knowledge transfer. However, the studies of economic, cultural and social impact do not consider the strategic thinking required in event management. Further, there is published work on the creativity of events and studies examining the role of the creatives and artists as the actors in this context (Chen, 2009; Garcia, 2010; Goldbard, 2006). However, there is very little published on the creative process for event management. Both of these issues are central to this research. There is a burgeoning literature on the environmental impacts of events and the subject of sustainable event management practices. Organisers of events are increasingly looking to highlight their green credentials. However, audiences and other key stakeholders are suspicious of unsubstantiated environmental claims (Laing & Frost, 2010). Refereed papers presented at an Australian Centre for Event Management (ACEM) conference in 2009
focused on event sustainability as an emergent sector theme. A total of eight papers were presented on the subject (Australian Centre for Event Management, 2009). The focus in the conference literature and more broadly was on operational, environmental practices, or how to minimise the carbon footprint of an event (Marles, Merrilees, & Couchmann, 2009; Carlsen, Jones, Pilgrim, & Ingram, 2009; Fox & Johnston, 2009; Jones, Sustainable event management: a practical guide, 2010). There have been successful calls for a global standard for sustainable event practices (Arcodia & Cohen, 2007). Holistic evaluation plays a significant role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of events as a form of credible communications (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005). In other words, sustainability is about more than environmental issues. Supply chain management literature is also cited as questions are raised about the source of event ‘ingredients’ such as food, beverage, equipment and audiences (Eastham, Sharples, & Ball, 2001).

In summary the literature suggests that the event sector contributes to the economy through attracting tourist and other income to cities and regions in Australia and beyond (Moeran & Pedersen, 2011; Langen & Garcia, 2009). Some elements of this economic, social and cultural value seem to be measurable and tangible (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). It is suggested that a more holistic approach to evaluating the impact of events...
can support events as a sustainable communications medium (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005). However, such studies are concerned with the operational aspects of event management. This is a matter identified widely in the literature. This study contributes by considering how strategic thinking as well as operational issues impact on event management and in particular on the creative process.

2.2.1.1 Significance of Events as a Cultural Communications Medium

While the social landscape is shifting to a predominantly online communications model, events are nonetheless proliferating. The cultural significance of events as a creative communications form in an online-dominated environment is considered in this study on event management (Küng, 2008; Blossom, 2009). Social changes in the consumption of communications in developed economies have influenced the popularity of events (Flew, 2009; Flew, Spurgeon, & Daniel, 2009). Over the past decade festivals and events as communications and entertainment forms have been one of the fastest growing areas of the world leisure industry, defying the shift to an online environment (Getz, 1991; Nicholson & Pearce, 2000; Li & Petrick, 2006). Despite this, little is understood about event management at a strategic level. This thesis addresses these issues.
There is a range of reasons for this growth. Societies in developed economies have increased spending on experiences rather than on material objects and this trend has continued over the last three decades (Howard, 2006). Recreation, education and knowledge have become important components of these experiences (Foley & McPherson, 2000). As societies become increasingly complex, hybrid experiences incorporating such factors are a burgeoning aspect of the leisure landscape (McPherson G. , 2006). The popularity of events has developed despite technological advances, decreasing costs (Moore G. E., 1965; Mollick, 2006) and increasing usage of virtual and online communications (Coffman & Odlyzko, 2002). Events use key messages as props or stages, to produce memorable and emotionally positive moments for audiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Holbrook, 2000). The event is popular as a device for creative expression for the aesthetic and the commercial benefit of business, art and community as audiences seek choice in their live experiences (Petkus, 2004; Burton, Louviere, & Young, 2009). An extensive review of the literature across a variety of disciplines, including marketing communications, sociology, economics, cultural policy and philosophy identifies social trends to explain this emergent popularity and significance. Figure IV adapted from (Howard, 2006) presents a summary of the key trends in communications and suggests a move towards a more participative, active consumption of communications.
The communications trends identified by the patterns in Figure IV are an evolutionary process. As consumers and audiences in modern societies develop, so do their demands. The trend is a shift from more passive broadcast forms towards more interactive communication, focused on the needs of the consumer or audience (Howard, 2006). Broad social trends leading to the communications shifts illustrated in Figure IV are found in the literature. Building on the six issues highlighted in Figure IV (Howard, 2006), the following seven trends have been identified during this literature search as relevant to the context of this thesis. Each trend discussed in turn in relation to its impact on events:
2.2.1.2 Shifts in Population Age and Structure

People in Australia are living longer due to advances in diet and healthcare (Armstrong, Gillespie, Leeder, Rubin, & Russell, 2007). This demographic shift is leading to a larger proportion of the baby boomer population at retirement age and beyond with higher levels of leisure time (Healy, 2004; Onyx & Leonard, 2007). Events are often considered leisure activities (Watt, 1998). As well as enjoyment, social engagement, experiences and learning such as those attained through events have been cited as ways of offsetting age related conditions such as dementia (Glymour, Weuve, Fay, Glass, & Berkman, 2008; McFadden & Basting, 2010). In OECD countries this social group increasingly retains good levels of disposable income to pursue leisure-based activities such as events and year-round vacations (Freedman, 1999; Biggs, Phillipson, Leach, & Money, 2007). There is limited penetration of online media amongst older groups compared with the demographics of generations X and Y (Gracia & Herrero, 2009). In this context, the boundaries and differences between generations and their consumption of media and leisure activities have been considered. There are a limited number of inter-generational studies in the literature discussing leisure time. (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). However, there is empirical evidence to suggest an intrinsic motivation of the need to belong. This is relevant to this study of events. There is data on generational personality difference demonstrating generation X as more
extraverted and outgoing but considering social approval less important than their baby boomer predecessors (Twenge & Im, 2007). Evidence of heavy use of social networking sites by younger generation Y suggests a constant need for connection. However, this may not apply to physical social situations such as event gatherings, as social relationships become separated through the virtual space (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006). Events become a useful marketing communications device for brand owners to target a range of groups with common interests and are a forum for groups to engage socially (Ferguson & Brohaugh, 2010; Phillipson, Leach, Money, & Biggs, 2008).

2.2.1.3 Shifts in Consumption of Media

The increased cost and fragmentation of traditional media, such as TV and newspaper advertising has led organisations to consider alternatives for reaching their stakeholders (Webster, 2005). Audiences are becoming more discerning and knowledgeable, increasing their expectations of being educated and informed about products and services in a more interactive manner (Capraro, Broniarczyk, & Srivastava, 2003). Social trends identify a shift from the bundling of media messages towards a more audience driven, tailored approach to media consumption (Napoli, 2009). A further trend is the lack of attention dedicated to any one particular communications form as audiences ‘multi-task’ their media consumption (Pilotta, Schultz, Drenik, &
Rist, 2004; Schultz, Pilotta, & Block, 2005). Simultaneous media usage such as television viewing while online has increased, especially amongst emerging generations (Roberts & Foehr, 2008). Organisations are changing the way they communicate with their key publics in order to develop more meaningful relationships (Fillis, 2002; Grönroos, 2004; Payne & Holt, 1999; Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2001). This has led to an increase in the popularity of experiential and interactive media such as events, experiences and online communications (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Petkus, 2004).

2.2.1.4 Culture of Learning

As increasing numbers of people experience tertiary education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). There has been a growth in the culture of learning (Kearns & Papadopoulos, 2000). The concept of lifelong learning is an emergent area across broad segments of the population as they focus on their personal and professional development (Aspin, Collard, & Chapman, 2000). This applies in Australia and other OECD economies (Kearns & Papadopoulos, 2000). Such a development in personal knowledge leads to a desire for greater cultural engagement such as that experienced at events (Aaker & Briley, 2006). The engagement of individuals and organisations attending events facilitates the common knowledge effect of sharing of knowledge and ideas (Dixon, 2000). This in
turn builds local, regional, national and international networks (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000). The range of ways in which consumers engage in leisure pursuits also impacts the culture of learning. Serious leisure requires a great deal of investigation and investment on the part of the individual (Stebbins, 2007). Such leisure experiences are well researched on the part of the consumer. Generally they entail a higher level of cultural input and output than so called fast leisure activities where a more limited commitment may be required (Rojek, 1995).

2.2.1.5 Collective Individualism

Despite emerging generations considering they are unique and individual, there is still an inherent need to share, connect and fit in (Hodgkinson, 2008). This connection can be vicarious, through the use of online social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter (Shirky, 2008). The human interaction of events enables individuals to connect to wider groups with similar interests in a creative and personal way. The trend is towards sharing: files, knowledge, music and experiences (Deuze, 2006; Flew, Spurgeon, & Daniel, 2009; The Economist, 2011). This has also been reflected in how communities engage creatively on social issues. Earth Hour is a phenomenon born on the Internet extending to over four thousand events in eighty-eight countries globally (Sedger, 2009). Such events enable
individual expression whilst at the same time nurturing a sense of belonging to a broader ‘tribe’ or interest group (Jackson I., 2009).

2.2.1.6 Mass Localism

While collective individualism is concerned predominantly with the notion of identity, mass localism is focused on connection. Social challenges and the resultant demand for public services can be met through community engagement and participation. Local knowledge and action from citizens can play a supportive role in the broader actions of government and policy (Bunt & Harris, 2010). Community engagement and contribution is often manifested in the form of community events or festivals to help establish the connection between community members as well as celebrate traditions which support a sense of belonging (Gilchrist, 2009).

2.2.1.7 Cultural Capital

Finally, there is an increasing demand across most sectors of modern society for cultural experiences (Ginsburgh & Throsby, 2006). Developed nations are becoming knowledge, experience and creative economies (Rooney, McKenna, & Breit, 2008; Peters, Marginson, & Murphy, 2009; Howkins, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Greater consideration is being assigned to the measurement and value of such social and cultural capital to these economies (Burton & Griffin, 2008). Societies not only seek
knowledge through learning but also have an increased desire for cultural understanding and exchange (Castells, 2009; McPherson G., 2006). In the information society we are better travelled, better educated, better informed and better read than previous generations (Menou & Taylor, 2006). Audiences desire cultural stimulation and events provide social capital in this context (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). Economic globalisation has led to a loosening of boundaries between social and cultural groups. These broader influences can impact on local culture and values. Event and festival activities at a local level are informed by the global context (Matheson, Foley, & McPherson, 2006). Furthermore, emerging and increasingly dominant markets in Asia, such as India and China, represent very different philosophies from our own (Hofstede, 2007). A celebration of these cultures through events builds our knowledge and understanding as well as supporting the communities represented by those cultures (Derrett, 2003). In Australia migration further reinforces the positive benefits of such activities in a multicultural society (Chan, 2006). Migrant populations and the celebration of their cultures are often conveyed to a broader public through events such as Chinese New Year or Indian Diwali (Collins, Darcy, & Jordan, 2010).
2.2.1.8 Emerging New Skills

There is evidence in the literature that the future workforce will be structured and require a very different skill-set than those of today (Gardner, 2006; McMahon, Patton, & Tatham, 2003). These skills (in OECD countries) are more socially connected and collaborative in nature than the traditional learning environments of schools and universities (McWilliam & Haukka, 2008). Such skills include: creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, information fluency and technological literacy (University of Melbourne, 2011). Future learning is likely to be in a digital and social context compared with the more traditional didactic approach. The interactive and experiential nature of events can be used to facilitate these skills alongside emergent technology (Morgan & Adams, 2009).

2.2.2 Section Conclusion

The review of the existing literature in section 2.2 has established the significance of events and is summarised in Table B below. Each reason for the significance of events is illustrated, along with the corresponding source from the literature.
Table B. Significance of Study from the Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Source from Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The social landscape for the consumption of communications is shifting as technologies, societies and audiences change.</td>
<td>(Howard, 2006; Webster, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Societies and audiences wish to engage with communications on their terms, selecting the time, nature and quality and avoiding more traditional and ‘interruptive’ forms.</td>
<td>(Napoli, 2009; Schultz, Pilotta, &amp; Block, 2005; Grönroos, 2004; Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, &amp; Rickard, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Events are a live, interactive and experiential medium and continue to grow in popularity as a leisure pursuit.</td>
<td>(Getz, 1991; Li &amp; Petrick, 2006; Flew, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Events are developing in response to the needs of a more knowledge and experience based society and economy.</td>
<td>(Pine &amp; Gilmore, 1999; Holbrook, 2000; Petkus, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Events make a social, cultural and economic contribution to individuals, organisations, communities and societies.</td>
<td>(Jago, Fredline, Raybould, &amp; Deery, 2005; Allen, O’Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008; Moeran &amp; Pedersen, 2011; Langen &amp; Garcia, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This summary establishes why this study is significant and how it increases new knowledge as events contribute to society. This has implications for management and in turn the process of event management as the subject of this thesis. The next section is focused on the theory surrounding event management.
2.3 Parent Literature One: Event Management

There are three parent literatures supporting the context of the study. These theories have been examined to develop research issues and a conceptual model for exploration in the field. The convergence of three theories enables a unique setting for the subsequent research. The first parent literature identified from the literature is event management. The significance of events as the context of this study has been established. How the creative process and strategic thinking relate specifically to event management is the unit of analysis for this thesis. Understanding the current theory surrounding event management helps define issues for the research.

In section 2.3.1 definitions of event management are explored, concluding with a specific definition of event management for the purposes of this thesis. This definition builds on work by Getz (2000a; 2002) and provides a framework for the exploration of the event management literature, structured as follows. Section 2.3.2 discusses how events create a specific context for the application of management principles. This includes understanding the event ‘civilisation’ (Perry G., 2011) consisting of the history, culture, impacts, structure and environment of events to gain a broader understanding of the events world within which this study is based. Section 2.3.3 examines the generic principles of management and how these principles are applied in events. The Event Management Body of
Knowledge (EMBOK) (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) is discussed as a conceptual framework for consolidating management systems and processes into an events context. As there is a broad range of event types there are management implications to understanding the unique form of each event. Section 2.3.4 relates to these event forms. Section 2.3.5 discusses the temporary setting within which events are situated and section 2.3.6 the live audience for events. Both these sections contribute further to explicating the uniqueness of the event form. This has implications for event management. Finally, the research issues arising from this parent theory are presented in the section conclusion (2.3.7).

2.3.1 Definitions of Event Management

While there are many definitions in the literature of what constitutes the particular form and characteristics of events (see also The Event Management Civilisation section 2.3.2), defining event management is less clear. The concept of event management has arisen from a field of practice and as such is fragmented along the lines of that practice. In the same way ‘trades’ emerged historically from guilds and other associations of practice, event management is structured around a range of specialisations. Event planning, meeting management, conference organisation, special event management, exhibition management and festival management are all
terms prevalent in the literature (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Getz, 2000a; Getz, 1997; Shone & Parry, 2004; Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006; Harris R., Jago, Allen, & Huyskens, 2000).

There is no generic definition of event management, although some attempts have been made to define event management as a form of project, derived from the project management literature. (Rutherford-Silvers, 2011) Event Management Body of Knowledge website defines event management in this way: 'encompassing the assessment, definition, acquisition, allocation, direction, control and analysis of time, finances, people, products, services and other resources to achieve objectives…including researching, planning, organising, implementing, controlling and evaluating an event’s design, activities and production.’

This conceptual definition partly explains event management. However it does not specify how an event is distinct and unique when compared with other projects. There are further calls in the literature for guidance in definition (Getz, 2002). It is suggested that event management is an immature field with limited ability to define specifically the practices and processes that exist within it. There is no clearly structured field of knowledge surrounding event management. Event management remains a relatively new phenomenon of exploration in the academic context,
emerging as a more frequently published subject in journals only since the
1990s. New journals have emerged in the field such as the International
Management (Vol. 6 Issue 1. 2000) (formerly Festival Management & Event
Tourism - Vol.1 Issue 1. 1993), International Journal of Festival and Event
Management (Vol. 1 Issue 1. 2010) and the Journal of Convention & Event
Tourism (Vol. 1 Issue 1. 2004) (formerly known as the Journal of

New education programs, degrees and other tertiary qualifications in event
management have proliferated in the last decade. The UK-based
Association of Event Management Educators (AEME) is dedicated to events
education. In Melbourne, Australia there is local representation of the
International Special Events Society (ISES) representing the special events
sector (founded in Chicago in 1987 and with 7,000 members worldwide).
Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) is also represented in Melbourne as
an event industry association since 1995. In terms of event studies in
Melbourne the Victorian Tourism and Event Educators Network (VTEEN)
represents the tertiary institutions in the state of Victoria offering event
management as an educational pathway. Events are supported at the State
government level through the Victorian Events Industry Council (VEIC).
Despite this range of representative bodies, the term event management is ambiguous in much of the event literature. It is mainly presented as a multi-disciplinary field, drawing on a range of broader bodies of knowledge. Anthropology, sociology, economics, marketing and cultural policy have all been cited as relevant to event management due to the broad nature and human aspect of events (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). The main work by Getz (2000a; 2002) provides a conceptual framework suggesting event management comprises both event studies and management foundations, which are then applicable to specific event forms. These specific event forms represent a range of types of event or event programs. The foundations of the field sit within general management theory.

The Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) provides a conceptual framework of how management and project management principles can be applied to event management (see also definition by Silvers). Furthermore, the unique design and setting of each individual event grounds the theory further into management models applicable to short-term business forms (Tesone, Ross, & Upchurch, 2010). These business forms can be referred to as ‘connected temporary coalitions’ (Begley, Taylor, & Bryson, 2009) designated for each specific and unique event need and setting.
Finally, further to the unique and temporary form of events and the subsequent issues for management, there is a further distinction between event management and the management of other projects. The liveness (Auslander, 2008) of the event medium brings homogeneity applicable across event types and uniqueness when contrasted with other projects: ‘Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance’ (Phelan, 1993, p. 146). No other project has a specific and present live audience during the management process. The unique aspect of event management is the live audience’s participation and influence over the management process as the event ‘plays out’. For the purposes of this thesis event management is considered unique to other projects due to its live audience. In summary the extant literature describes event management as featuring the characteristics listed in Table C. Each characteristic is summarised and the relevant literature source presented in turn.

**Table C. Characteristics of Event Management from the Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Management Characteristic</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Management processes derived historically from a diverse range event types</td>
<td>(Allen, O’Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008; Getz, 2000a; Shone &amp; Parry, 2004; Harris R. , Jago, Allen, &amp; Huyskens, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Difficult to define; attempts are focused on broad management principles</td>
<td>(Rutherford Silvers, 2003; Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, &amp; Nelson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Event Management Characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Management Characteristic</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. An immature field of knowledge, emerging in the last 10 to 20 years</td>
<td>(Getz, 2000a; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increasing in popularity as an area of academic study and research</td>
<td>(Getz, 2000a; Getz, 2002; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(formerly *Festival Management & Event Tourism* - Vol.1 Issue 1. 1993) and *the Journal of Convention & Event Tourism* (Vol. 1 Issue 1. 2004)  
(formerly known as the Journal of Convention & Exhibition Management - Vol. 1 Issue 1. 1997) |
| 6. Drawn from a range of management fundamentals such as HR and Marketing                       | (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Getz, 2002)                                                                                                                                              |
| 7. Management issues are focused on a temporary business form (the event)                      | (Tesone, Ross, & Upchurch, 2010)                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 8. Management responds to unique form of each event, although there may be similarities between events | (Begley, Taylor, & Bryson, 2009)                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 9. Comprises a live audience as part of the management process                                  | (Auslander, 2008; Phelan, 1993)                                                                                                                                                                       |

Based on these descriptions from this range of sources, event management has been defined for the purposes of this thesis as:
The application of a management framework established by combining the specific context of events with generic principles of management in order to create a unique experience for a live audience within a temporary setting.

How these core characteristics relate to one another can be seen in Figure III. This Figure builds on the work initiated by Getz (2000a; 2002). First, the specific context of events deals with the world in which events operate. The term civilisation (Perry G., 2011) is used in this thesis to encompass the broad environment of events. This comprises the economic, political, environmental, technological, legal and social framework within which events exist and are influenced. Second, the general, but temporal principles of management applicable to projects and in particular through the event management body of knowledge (EMBOK) are considered in terms of their influence on event management. The temporary nature of events is considered within this context. Third is a series of three concentric circles to represent the ‘filters’ to which the combined event context and management principles can be applied. The first of these is the form of event. This event form is unique to each event, event type or event program, such as a conference, festival or opening ceremony. Second, is the temporary setting in which the event is situated. This setting will be
limited in duration (in relation to the timeframe of the event) and relates not only to the physical location or space but also to the theme, style and mood of the event. Finally and at the heart of why an event faces unique management issues when compared with other projects is the live audience. The event ‘performance’ consists of a level of interaction between live audience and organisers. Traditional management fundamentals and stakeholder challenges but also the audience milieu and how they relate to the overall experience of the event will influence this interaction.
Figure V. Conceptual Framework to Define Event Management

The subsequent sections discussing the theory of event management are structured around the components of this definition and conceptual framework. This enables a full and detailed exploration of the various aspects of the definition of event management used in this thesis to identify
research issues for exploration. The first of these sub-sections is the specific context of events, the event management civilisation.

2.3.2 The Event Management Civilisation

The term civilisation (Perry G., 2011) has been used as distinct from the event environment or context. This term implies a broader range of considerations when describing the events ‘world’ in which this study is situated. Civilisation not only incorporates the current influences on event management but also the latent issues derived from the historical development and broader influences impacting event management. First, the history, nature and characteristics are presented in order to set the specific context of events as distinct from other projects. Then, the event environment through the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal framework of event management and events is explored. The combination of context and environmental framework forms the event civilisation. Hence civilisation is defined in this thesis as the world in which events have existed, do exist and may exist in the future.

2.3.2.1 The History, Nature and Characteristics of Events

There are many descriptions of events in the literature across varying event types (Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2006; Goldblatt, 2000; Getz, 1997; Harris R., Jago, Allen, & Huyskens, 2000; Jago & Shaw, 1998).
Many definitions are in agreement that events were originally used as a celebration in terms of a ceremony or ritual (Brown & James, 2004). These rituals and ceremonies have been an essential component of celebration and communication in the lives of human beings since the ‘dawn of time’ (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5). Furthermore, in Australian culture, indigenous populations have been using dance, song and storytelling as a way of marking particular occasions and to pass knowledge between generations (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). Events are distinguished by their accessibility to the public, often comprising a central theme and with specified dates and times of operation (Getz, 1997). Meetings or events are further described as a gathering of a number of people in order to carry out a specific activity and often in a particular place: ‘a planned communication encounter between two or more persons for a common purpose’ (Hildreth, 1990, p. 1). Often, events have emerged as ideas from a community to celebrate and reflect an aspect of that community and its culture (Derrett, 2000; Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004; Mayfield & Crompton, 1995). Particular examples include large-scale street festivals such as Carneval in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Raphael, 1990), the Notting Hill Carnival in London, England (Evans & Shaw, 2004; Raj, 2003), or the Moomba Festival in Melbourne, Australia (Fredline, Deery, & Jago, 2006; Martin, Seffrin, & Wissler, 2004). Many events feature commonalities based on the nature of the medium and the requirements of stakeholders.
The liveness (Auslander, 2008) of the event medium creates a unique attribute for events when contrasted with other communications. Within the framework of live performance, events have been defined as the antithesis of other less interactive media forms and a tonic for audiences who have endured the ‘pollution’ of other media (Bogosian, 1994). Events are seen in this context as something created collectively with a human voice, rather than modern electronic noise (Bogosian, 1994). The characteristics common to events and illustrated by a range of authors are summarised below in Table D:

### Table D. Characteristics of Events from the Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Characteristics</th>
<th>Source from Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Original and unique, symbolising a moment in time</td>
<td>(Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2006; Goldblatt, 2000; Getz, 1997; Jago &amp; Shaw, 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 One off experiences</td>
<td>(Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Comprise an element of perishability, unlikely to be repeated the same way twice</td>
<td>(Auslander, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Feature personal contact and interaction</td>
<td>(Hildreth, 1990; Getz, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Intangible, focused on the experience, rather than any physical material</td>
<td>(Derrett, 2000; Gursoy, Kim, &amp; Uysal, 2004; Mayfield &amp; Crompton, 1995; Bowen &amp; Daniels, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Usually take place over a fixed timeframe (defined as hours or days)</td>
<td>(Shone &amp; Parry, 2004; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008; Goldblatt, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Require significant planning resources to</td>
<td>(Jago &amp; Shaw, 1998; Goldblatt, 2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The unique characteristics of an event compared with other media can evoke a range of audience stimuli, creating an emotional connection core to human communication (Bowen & Daniels, 2005). Events are seen as ‘benchmarks for our lives’ (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5) as we mark particular occasions with celebratory activities. In contemporary terms this extends to a broad spectrum of communities. Table E provides a list of these characteristics and their corresponding sources in the literature:

Table E. Characteristics of Event Communities from the Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Community Characteristics</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The generation of business output by commercial communities and facilitated by temporary clusters such as meetings, conferences and exhibitions</td>
<td>(Hankinson, 2005; Maskell, Bathelt, &amp; Malberg, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The performing and visual arts activities of creative communities</td>
<td>(Florida, 2004; Goldbard, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The large scale gatherings of sporting and music</td>
<td>(Crompton, 1995;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Event Community Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The particular ritual or celebration of social, ethnic and festival communities (Goldblatt, 1997; Morgan M., 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The connection of spontaneous communities as they form and subsequently disperse on behalf of a political cause, social purpose or simply just for fun (Matheson C., 2005; Mason &amp; Beaumont-Kerridge, 2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The audiences and stakeholders across these communities are wide ranging and the objectives behind each event varied (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2006; Getz, 1997). The event audience and organizers may anticipate the outcomes of events; equally other outcomes may not be anticipated due to the unique nature of many events (Getz, 2005; Roberts & Foehr, 2008). In summary, the literature suggests there is clarity in defining the characteristics of events. Despite the diversity of event types, there is similarity in the nature of events as a form of human expression and connection. Although the way in which they are organised may be specific to each type of event, they are universal both in appeal and spirit as an emotionally driven medium (Bowen & Daniels, 2005). Having established the event civilisation in terms of history, nature and attributes, the next section will focus on the event world as it exists and is influenced by the broader environment.
2.3.2.2 The Event Environment

An environmental scanning process is used to understand better the world of events arising from the literature (Aguilar, 1967). This process is adopted based on its relevance as a method of understanding the wider issues of an industry or organisation. It focuses on: ‘information about events and relationships in a company's outside environment, the knowledge of which would assist top management in its task of charting the company's future course of action’ (Aguilar, 1967, p. 1). The scanning process includes the broader issues in terms of the general environment in the context of political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal conditions. The following, adapted for the research from (Reinhardt, 1984), summarises the typical issues within an environmental scan:

1. Growing impact of new technologies
2. Increasing governmental influence on industry
3. New centres of power
4. Shifts in population structure
5. Changed motivation for work
6. Changed value concepts and lifestyles
7. Need for new management concepts
The majority of the literature is based on research around the economic impacts of events, especially in the area of tourism (Sherwood, Jago, & Deery, 2005). The literature therefore tends to centre on the issue of economic impact. However, there is a smaller body of literature around other key influences and challenges in the sector (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Shone & Parry, 2004). An adaptation of PESTEL analysis has been employed to explore the general environment in the events industry (Luffman, Lea, & Kenny, 1996; Lynch, 1997). This analysis refers to the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors influencing the environment in which an industry such as events must operate (Day, 1990; Mayer-Wittman, 1989). Each factor is now illustrated in turn.

2.3.2.3 Political Factors

The politics surrounding event management are driven by the funding agenda (Burbank, Andranovich, & Heying, 2002; Finkel & Goldblatt, 2009). Different events will have varying levels of intervention by government. Mega-events such as Olympic or Commonwealth Games are viewed from an international perspective and as such generate the attention of politicians and other government stakeholders (Kellett, Hede, & Chalips, 2008). State and federal government policy on funding for arts, cultural and sporting
activities have an impact on the events taking place around such activities (Johanson & Glow, 2008).

Major government institutions and local council bodies consider events as a mechanism for attracting tourism to host destinations and as such have policies for investment in events (O'Sullivan, Pickernell, & Senyard, 2009). These investments may be one off and significant, such as for mega events but may also be ongoing such as the support provided to convention bureaux and exhibition centres, tasked with attracting events to particular destinations (Lee & Back, 2005). These policies can be exercised at both a local and a broader level. Public policy on relationships with private enterprise can also have an impact on the nature and range of events within a particular environment (Ward & Cook, 2011). Such policies may influence a city either towards or against being a host destination for a broad range of festivals, corporate and knowledge events as well as the large scale, one off sporting events most cited in the literature (Cox & Mair, 1988; Owen, 2000; Ward, 2006). Events themselves can also be used as a device for political demonstration, speaking out against government or other issues (McPhail & Wohlstein, 1983). Government policy on events as a legitimate medium for social comment will influence the range and extent of their use (Scalmer, 2002).
2.3.2.4 Economic and Financial Factors

The literature cites the recent global financial crisis as having a major impact on the discretionary spending of business, consumers, governments and communities (Edey, 2009). One victim of spending cuts is perceived luxuries such as leisure pursuits, including tourism and events (Sheldon & Dwyer, 2010). Despite the economic and social value they bring, events are for the most part categorised and perceived as indulgences and leisure pursuits (Sheldon & Dwyer, 2010). Compounding the issue of spend is the issue of cost. Fluctuations in fuel prices, global currency exchange rates and other ‘base’ costs such as food, beverage and venues all lead to uncertainty across industry sectors (Chhibber, Ghosh, & Palanivel, 2009). Government investment in infrastructure will also impact the industry (Laurie & McDonald, 2008). Spend on event infrastructure such as convention centres, access to aviation routes and hotel accommodation to support tourist and business travel numbers will stimulate the events sector (Australian Government, 2011). Government stimulus spending has supported the ongoing consumption of goods and services in Australia (Prasad & Isaac, 2009). However, the economic downturn has brought with it challenges. International businesses are not spending on the same scale, which may lead to a lack of investment in events (Global Economics Crisis Resource Center, 2009). The global financial crisis has resulted in reduced business travel for event attendance, more competitive pricing for event
services and a reduction in the size and scale of events (Kitchin & Ferdinand, 2012). Due to these pressures, event managers are encouraged to strategise new ways of developing sustainable competitive advantage (Pegg & Patterson, 2010). The financial sensitivity of events may drive the sector to justify why financial investment should be made (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000). This justification may require divergent thinking and increased collaboration to encourage insight and creativity in challenging times (Devine & Devine, 2012).

2.3.2.5 Social and Cultural Factors

In section 2.2.1 the social trends in the consumption of media as they are presented in the literature were discussed. Such social trends imply an experience-based culture, with increasingly fragmented media and a desire by individuals to connect; (Ralston, Ellis, Compton, & Lee, 2007). Due to the interactive and live characteristics of events (Phelan, 1993), these trends suggest a place for events in such a landscape. A range of events feature cultural and creative value production as core components of their reason for being. Mega events such as Olympic Games combine high creativity (for opening and closing ceremonies), complex logistics and socio cultural benefits (Garcia, 2010). Such events leave a legacy that may or may not have a positive forward effect on host communities. However, as well as generating potential benefits, socio-cultural issues can also impact the event
sector. These issues have been identified and summarised from the literature under the following headings:

**Social Impact:** As well as the perceived economic benefits of hosting an event there are also potential negative social impacts (Small, Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005). The mitigation of such impacts can be managed through event organisers and policy makers alike. Such policies need to balance the positive social, cultural and economic impacts of events with the potential negative implications (McGillivray, Foley, & McPherson, 2011). Disruption to the lives of host communities is an issue identified in the literature (Getz, 1997; Delamere, Wankel, & Hinch, 2001; Douglas, Douglas, & Derrett, 2001; Small, Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005). Such disruptions can include traffic congestion and parking problems, increased noise levels and overcrowding of local facilities. Furthermore, social problems such as crime and vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse and local resident safety concerns can lead to increased stress levels and malcontent amongst host communities (Delamere, Wankel, & Hinch, 2001; Douglas, Douglas, & Derrett, 2001; Small, Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005). Equally however, the literature suggests the opposite is true in certain contexts (Moscardo, 2008). Festivals in particular are viewed as a device for generating wellbeing and good feeling amongst both host and visitor populations (Hilbers, 2005). The measurement of such social impacts is complex and difficult. These benefits
are recognised increasingly and a socio-cultural impact evaluation (SCIE) is recommended, although economics remain the predominant measure of success for festivals and events (Willington-Brown & Trimboli, 2011).

**Commercialisation:** The increased commercialisation of events may lead to loss of community feel (Cummings, 2008). Commercial objectives such as ticket revenue, increased attendance numbers and corporate sponsorship may lead to concern that an event has ‘sold out’ against more creative or altruistic objectives (Hoyle, 2002; Burton, 2009). Events born out of a social motive may become commoditised through corporate support (Anderton, 2008). The unique characteristic of events as an emotional moment in time (Goldblatt, 2005) could be refocused on commercial objectives (Thrane, 2002; Walo, Bull, & Green, 1996; Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004).

**Saturation:** As events continue to increase in popularity there is the danger of event fatigue if society perceived events to be a tired and overused medium (Richards G., 2007). Alternative forms of media could be seen as preferable as emerging generations adopt new technologies (Buckingham & Willett, 2006). The increasing use of online communications and adoption of other e-media such as gaming and social networking could pose a threat to the social popularity of events (Fung, 2008).
**Interruption:** The increasingly invasive nature of interruptive media discussed from the literature earlier in this chapter could also apply to events in the future (Gitlin, 2007; Klein N., 2000). As events become more mainstream and commercialised their encroachment into the lives of audiences may generate a more negative view of events. There may be a blurring of the boundaries between events as creative, artistic endeavours versus a more intrusive media form.

### 2.3.2.6 Technological Factors

Moore’s Law (Moore G. E., 1965) suggested that the power of technology doubles as the cost of producing that technology halves. In the context of this study, technology can be used to manage, market and measure events (Hoyle, 2002). Use of social and other online media alongside event management software packages can support the invitation process for events, relieving the unpredictability of audience numbers and subsequent safety/reputation risks (Bernstein, 2007). The emergence of social media as a cost effective marketing tool diminishes the barriers to entry for potential event organisers. The demand for cultural goods such as events is influenced by taste, style and word of mouth (Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008). As such new technologies can influence the way in which events are marketed and communicated as well as managed and delivered (Throsby, 2001). Greater access and lower cost has led to a higher level of
adoption of a wide range of technologies by the event sector (Ferre, Hill, Halls, Chung-How, Nix, & Bull, 2009). Developments in event technologies are leading to blended performances where spectator and event interact digitally as well as physically (Sheridan & Bryan-Kinns, 2008; McPherson G., 2006). Such technologies have the potential to replace or complement certain event types and as such will create an impact in the events sector. Equally, technology can provide a supporting role to the events sector (Benford, et al., 2006). Decreasing costs have enabled greater leverage of technology to create particular environments, spectacles and experiences for audiences (Reeves, Benford, O'Malley, & Fraser, 2005).

2.3.2.7 Environmental Factors

The issue of climate change is discussed across most industries and events are no exception. The literature on event sustainability focuses on the operational aspects of minimising the carbon footprint of an event (Jones, 2010; Saeed-Kahn & Clements, 2009; Griffin, 2009). Issues such as waste management, water use, transportation and the locating of events in environmentally fragile areas are highlighted as areas of concern when managing an environmentally friendly event (Getz, 2009). Further to management challenges is perception amongst event audiences and other key stakeholders. Consumers continue to raise questions about the environmental responsibility of the products they buy and services they
consume and this has management implications for events (Liu, 2011). There are in this context threats to the long-term viability of event management practice. Fossil-fuel depletion and regulations pertaining to climate change will impact on travel and attendance at events (Jones, 2012). After a period of growth, the event sector may need to think differently in order to continue to offer the social and cultural benefits afforded by events (Devine & Devine, 2012).

2.3.2.8 Legal Factors

The legal implications of event management may impact on the ability of events to have real consequence in contributing to social change and/or leave an ongoing legacy (Roach Anleu, 2009). The process becomes focused on risk management rather than event management (Eisenhauer, 2007). In a society represented in the media as increasingly litigious (Galanter, 1984; Howard-Wagner, 2008), the events industry faces management and process issues to mitigate such risks (Barton, 2007). This mitigation may impact on the creative process in event management as lower risks are taken creatively in the shadow of potential risks and the consequences thereof (Douglas, 2010). Increased likelihood of litigation also brings with it higher insurance premiums (Rejda, 2002) as the forms of litigation become more broad ranging and indiscriminate (Selin & VanDeveer, 2009).
The combination of these contextual and environmental factors provides insight into the event civilisation in which this study is situated. This civilisation contributes to the overall picture of event management as derived from the literature. This specific context is now related to broader management principles, including the event management body of knowledge (EMBOK), and how these principles apply to event management.

### 2.3.3 The Application of Management Principles to Event Management

This section focuses on how the broader and well-documented principles of management are applied to event management in the literature. This has implications for event management and this study. These principles, combined with the specific context identified through the event civilisation create a foundation for application to different event forms, audiences and settings. This builds on work by Getz (2005) and Rutherford-Silvers (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006), which suggests that management principles are required to set a frame for event management.

First, the fundamentals of management are illustrated from the broader literature to identify the key areas relevant to events. Secondly the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) is introduced (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). EMBOK derives a range of
management activities from project management theory and applies them to event projects. This study is an interpretive study of the creative and strategic processes present in event management. It is not a thesis on general management. It deals specifically with the application of certain (strategic and creative) principles to event management in the context of the research problem. However, in order to understand the context of event management, the body of knowledge published around the subject of management theory in events is explored.

Getz suggests the fundamentals of management can be applied to an event context (2002; 2000a). The fundamentals proposed by Getz are mainly derived from the scientific management principles initiated by Taylor (1911) and have formed the basis of much of the traditional management literature (Drucker, 1954; 1973; 1998) and Deming (1982). A wide range of authors has refined these fundamentals but at their core they remain similar (Koontz, 1980; Mintzberg, 1973; 1975; Likert, 1961; Koontz & O'Donnell, 1968). Such management fundamentals suggest a planning led and formulaic process rather than a fluid learning style from which creative strategies can evolve (Mintzberg, 1987)
Table F illustrates how the Getz-proposed management fundamentals applied to events are closely aligned to the wider literature on a traditional management paradigm.
Table F. Application of Traditional Management Paradigm to Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Management Characteristic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Management Characteristic applied to events (Getz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Planning: defining key objectives and considering how these objectives will be achieved</td>
<td>Mintzberg (1973; 1975; 1985; 1994)</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Leading: motivating the people within the structure to help them see how contribution to objectives is of mutual benefit</td>
<td>Kotter (2000; 2003), Welch (1998; 2005)</td>
<td>Programming &amp; scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Controlling: refining and correcting the activities of the people within the structure to ensure that objectives are being met.</td>
<td>Drucker, (1954; 1973; 1998; 2001) Deming (1982)</td>
<td>Control, evaluation; event risk management; finance &amp; budgeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These traditional management stages apply to events according to Getz (2000a). Getz proposes they act as the foundation from which subsequent event specific activities are executed. The broad principles are refined dependent on the event form, setting and audience. This traditional management paradigm emerged from management theory based on sedentary and traditional organisational structures (Otley, 1994). Manufacturing was the dominant force in developed economies when many of the traditional theories were devised (Drucker, 2001). However, the temporary nature of event projects will have organisational and management implications for this study. As it has been established through the parent literature, event management is concerned with the delivery of knowledge based, creatively led and temporal activities. This set of activities requires a non-traditional structure. While many organisations recognise the need to be adaptive and flexible in order to stay competitive (Porter, Competitive Advantage, 1985), there may be evolving circumstances in event management that require a less formulaic approach than traditional management literature implies (Mintzberg, 1987). As such an alternative temporary based theoretical management paradigm is considered to complement the Getz theory.

There are structural and management differences between long-term and short-term organisations (Galbraith, 1994). This will impact on the
management strategies and tactics chosen by those organisations. (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). The traditional management paradigm has emerged from mainly long-term organisations. There is evidence in the literature that sustainable organisational structures reject traditional management strategies in favour of more fluid innovation driven objectives (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004). While there are examples of a number of events which have longer-term organisational structures such as long running festivals or Olympic Games, event management as a process is often temporary in nature and as such features the uncertainty, time challenges and diversity of resources illustrated through a more temporary paradigm in Figure VI, adapted for this study from (Modig, 2007).

Figure VI. Stationary versus Temporary Management Paradigms

Source: Adapted for this research from Modig 2007 & Galbraith 1974
This model illustrates how a temporary organisation such as those dominating the event management landscape differs in structure to a stationary organisation such as those dominating traditional management theory. The boundaryless or protean careers of event managers and other workers in the creative industries can be considered within this model (Bridgstock, 2005; Baum, Deery, Hanlon, Lockstone, & Smith, 2009). Employees are often part-time or contract based. Organisational structures are looser and more temporary. There is a range of management implications that have relevance to the definition of event management for the purposes of this thesis and subsequent field research. These implications are explained in Table G as follows:

**Table G. Management Implications for a Temporary Organisation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Implication</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Time</td>
<td>There is a greater compression of time in a deadline based event management environment when compared with a traditional cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Process</td>
<td>Due to the unpredictable nature of event audiences and resources, the processes are more ad hoc than in a predefined management structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Resource Network</td>
<td>The event manager brings with them a network of subject specialists to manage and execute specific project components. In many static organisations this network of resources is driven and managed centrally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Employment</td>
<td>Employment in event management is often temporary, voluntary or project based. Clearly defined roles and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The generic principles of management applied by Getz to events have relevance as broad constructs. However, these principles are reconsidered in the context of this thesis and research given the peculiar, temporal qualities of event management. The normal constraints of management may not apply. The humdrum of traditional and commercial management activities need to be reconciled with the creative output required of event management (Caves, 2000). These implications have been considered for the definition of event management for the purposes of this thesis (see definition in Figure V) and the subsequent research in the field.

Further to the broad principles of management, event management in the literature is additionally described as a form of project management. The Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) (Rutherford-Silvers,
Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) has been developed as a conceptual framework, applying project management theory to event management. The objective of EMBOK is to establish a range of management systems and processes for events. These processes enable the profession of event management to have a specific and defined structure that can be applied universally:

‘The EMBOK will help us all become better professionals, AND be recognized AS professionals by illustrating the scope and complexity of this profession to internal and external constituents and stakeholders, current and future practitioners, and allied and supplier industries, thereby increasing respect and reverence for the profession of events management and the specialized skills and knowledge it requires’ (Rutherford-Silvers, 2007, p. 15).

This quotation focuses on the reputation of a profession still defining itself, concerned about the external stakeholder view. However it does not include the key event differentials of live audiences in unique settings in its model. It provides a management framework derived from the project management literature but the word ‘event’ can be interchanged with the word ‘project’ throughout the EMBOK structure. The unique liveness (Auslander, 2008) of an event is overlooked within this model. The definition of event management in this thesis builds on the EMBOK definitions by considering the unique live aspect of events.
EMBOK features five phases of event management, ranging from event initiation to event closure. EMBOK also features five core values, including strategic thinking and creativity. These phases and core values flow through all aspects of the process and help explain event management in a systematic manner.

Figure VII has been adapted from the EMBOK model (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) for the purposes of this thesis to explicate the key areas of focus for research. It illustrates the two core values of strategic thinking and creativity (highlighted in red) explored in this study. These areas are identified as two of five core values within the EMBOK conceptual framework. While the creativity of events has been discussed in the literature there has been little research on the creative process in event management. The EMBOK model refers specifically to event management systems and processes. This forms the focus of this study and contribution of this research. Furthermore the preliminary phases of initiation and planning (highlighted in red) are considered as the foci for strategic planning and the creative process (see also creative process in section 2.4). This research is focused on these two core values during the first two phases of the event management process identified by EMBOK.
Getz (2000a; 2002) cites traditional management fundamentals as applicable to event management. To these fundamentals the temporary nature of events has been added (Modig, 2007), alongside the project management theory embodied by EMBOK (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). Specifically the core values of strategic thinking and the creative process in the initiation and planning phases of event management are considered. Scrutiny of these values and phases answers calls from the literature to contribute further to event management research using the EMBOK framework (Robson, 2008).

These foundations can now be applied to the specific types and forms found in event management and in line with the definition used in this thesis.
2.3.4 Unique Event Types and Forms in Event Management

The event sector is diverse and the broad terms used in the literature across a variety of event types are reflective of this diversity. This section clusters the broad descriptions into a more contained structure to create a frame of reference for the subjects of this research.

Unlike the collective view on event characteristics, the extant literature does not draw any particular collective conclusions on how to define particular forms of events. There is no standard definition for each of the broad event types (Jago & Shaw, 1998; Getz, 2000a). Different meanings have been assigned to key terms such as special events, mega events, hallmark events or business events (Stokes, 2003). The closest attempt to broad definition comes from the International Dictionary of Event Management (Goldblatt & Nelson, 2001)

Event types can be structured based on the nature of the task at hand, each performing a variation derived from the overall characteristics of events outlined in the previous section. Table H summarises the range of event types from the literature. This table provides a backdrop to the diversity of the sector as important for study contextualisation. The research method and context in chapter 3 and chapter 4 provide detail on which event types described have been identified for the field research.
### Table H. Summary of Event types, Descriptions and Literature Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description for Special Events</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Defined from two main perspectives: the organiser and the audience</td>
<td>(Goldblatt, 2002; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Seen as over and above any routinely scheduled activity: ‘a special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body. To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience’</td>
<td>(Getz, 1997, p. 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Used to define a range of events, including rituals, presentations and performances, civic occasions, corporate functions or cultural performances</td>
<td>(Matthews, 2008; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Unique atmosphere and spirit of authenticity, tradition, hospitality and symbolism</td>
<td>(Matthews, 2008; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008; Getz, 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description for Business Events or MICE</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (M.I.C.E.)</td>
<td>(Rogers, 2008; Arcodia &amp; Robb, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Comprises annual general meetings, awards events, gala dinners, conferences and symposia and trade shows and exhibitions</td>
<td>(Weber &amp; Ladkin, 2003).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conference sector has a blurred boundary with academic, religious, political and association based conventions and congresses

(Yoo & Weber, 2005; Stokes, 2003; Getz, 1997; Victorian Events Industry Council, 2010)

Events within the business functions of marketing and human resources increasingly used as a tool for engaging the employees...

(Bolton & Houlihan, 2009; Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Truss, 2008)

..and customers of commercial businesses through memorable experiences

(Petkus, 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

An emergent theme in more recent literature is the concept of the ‘brand experience’

(Schmitt, 2009).

Organisations are creating events as moments of immersion for staff and consumers in order to engage interactively with a product or service.

(Smilansky, 2009; Dolen, 2011; Jackson K., 2009)

Adds a personal, face-to-face dimension to communications.

(Peppers, Rogers, & Dorf, 1999; Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2001; Fillis, 2002; Webster, 2005).

Defined by their size and scale and are often connected to major sports.

(Getz, 2005; Goldblatt, 2000)

Mega-events such as Commonwealth and Olympic games are invariably linked to a major city or destination bringing social, economic and cultural benefits

(Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005; Van der Wagen & Carlos, 2005)

Three scales are used in the literature to differentiate mega-events from other event forms as follows:

1. Volume: visitation from at least 1m people

(Getz, 2005; Marris, 1987; Stokes, 2003)
2. Psychology: an event which is on the must-attend list (although there is little further evidence of which specific variables determine attendance)

3. Cost: a minimum spend of $500m Canadian dollars

15 Extensive media coverage, tourism impact, public and private sector investment, political and social implications and economic influence are cited as outputs of mega events (Hall C. M., 1992).

16 Access for a mainstream audience to wider performing/visual arts and other cultural activities is also an additional benefit (Gelder & Robinson, 2011).

17 Creative activities surrounding the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006 provided a unique opportunity for unusual artistic endeavours to be savoured by local residents and visitors (Gordon, Guerrera, & Heath, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description for Hallmark Events</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 Hallmark events, as a form of special event, are a moment in time.</td>
<td>(Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Mentioned in the tourism literature as tourism numbers increase due to the unique, one off nature of such hallmark events</td>
<td>(Stokes, 2003; Ritchie B. , 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 The host location gains an element of competitive advantage over other tourism locations due to the presence of a hallmark event</td>
<td>(Getz, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Specifically identified with the 'spirit or ethos of a town, city or region that they become synonymous with the name of the place and gain widespread recognition and awareness'</td>
<td>(Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008, p. 13).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples include special events such as:
- the America’s Cup
- the 2001 Brisbane Goodwill games
- Carneval in Rio de Janeiro and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description for Hallmark Events</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 While festivals literature is well established with festivals identified as a form of event there is little analysis of strategic thinking and the creative process in festivals as live events.</td>
<td>(Chen, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Festivals are derived from community celebrations emerging from a ritual or ceremony.</td>
<td>(Allen, O’Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008; Falassi, 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Some festivals are ancient such as;</td>
<td>(Blain &amp; Wallis, 2008; Chippindale, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Maclean, 2009; Van der Wagen, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 the Solstice event at Stonehenge in the UK or;</td>
<td>(Stokes, 2003; Falassi, 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 the Maha Kumbh Mela Festival in India: the largest organised gathering of human beings in the world.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Festivals are focused around a particular thematic celebration such as food and wine, fashion or arts, engaging members of the local community as well as tourists.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Festivals often play a role in developing the cultural identity of a particular community due to the specific nature of the theme and its relation to that community.</td>
<td>(Mayfield &amp; Crompton, 1995)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are economic and social benefits attributed with increased visitation and spend from both locals and tourists (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005).

### Event Description for Sporting Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sporting events continue to represent a growing component of the events industry. (Sterken, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These sporting events range from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mega events such as Olympic games through to;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the grass roots activities of local sporting communities and clubs (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008; Cashman, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gibson, Willming, &amp; Holdnak, 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting events have a rich tradition going back over three millennia to the ancient Greek Olympics. (Toohey &amp; Veal, 2007; Cashman, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some are more unique to a locally based region and culture such as the Australian Rules Football Grand Final in Melbourne (McGrath, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sporting events are international but may bring local social and economic benefits to a host community (Burgan &amp; Mules, 1992; Preuss, 2006; Jago, Fredline, Raybould, &amp; Deery, 2005; Macfarlane &amp; Jago, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Formula One Grand Prix is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a series of events taking place internationally and;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• with global media coverage but with an annual event hosted locally by Melbourne in Australia. (Burns, Hatch, &amp; Mules, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fairleya, Tyler, Kellett, &amp; D’Elia, 2011).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There does however also exist in the literature some scepticism as to the economic impact and value large-scale sporting events bring to host cities:

(Ko, Zhang, Cattani, & Pastore, 2011; Fairley, Tyler, Kellett, & D'Elia, 2011; Pentifallo, 2010; du Plessis & Maennig, 2009; Tomlinson, 2011)
The definition of event management presented earlier in this chapter requires that the particular form of event be considered when applying management principles unique to temporal organisations. Consideration must also be given to the structure of event organisations that are not temporal, but rather exist as long-term organisations. Sporting, heritage events and festivals, for example, often have traditional structures for organisational composition (Chalip, 2006). However, the output of any event remains temporal (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). The unique aspects of each event form therefore will influence to what extent each aspect of management is applied. The next filter to be applied based on the event management definition is the setting within which the event form exists.

2.3.5 The Temporary Setting in Event Management

‘Outside, facing the city, the arena displays a lifeless wall; inside is a wall of people. The spectators turn their backs to the city ... they have left behind all their associations, rules and habits. Their remaining together in large numbers for a stated period of time is secure...but only under one definite condition: the discharge must take place inside the arena.’ — (Canetti, 1962, p. 31)

Despite the age of this quotation the fundamental emotions underlying live events remain valid. However, the event literature has not emphasised the
emotional, live setting of the event audience and the implications for event management. The setting in which most events exist is temporary, in line with the nature and characteristics of events as unique moments in time (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). The setting will have a time limit (usually expressed in hours or days) that further extends to the environment in which the participants will experience the event.

Events are often perceived by participants as an alternative world or escape from the routine of everyday life. (Gursoy, Spangenberg, & Rutherford, 2006). This is particularly applicable in the modern context as consumers increasingly seek experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Participants appropriate the event setting as the site of their experience, together with its associated symbols and meanings (Marling, Jensen, & Kiiba, 2009). The process of event management is used to ‘spatialise’ this environment with theme, mood and design for temporary purposes, thus creating a world for participants (Crang, 2001). This world provides a unique and temporary context (Valsiner, 2008) within which participants can connect with the event and each other engaging in ‘framed spontaneous play which contrasts routine everyday life’ (Jamieson, 2004, p. 65). Once again, the principles of management are applied to this setting to create the appearance of a spontaneous happening that in fact has been as a result of energy, organization, resource allocation and strategy and creativity planning on the
part of the event organizers (Jamieson, 2004). The idea of an event as a momentary interruption of the status quo appears counter-intuitive to the management fundamentals of planning and control. However, it is an important aspect of the value of events as perceived spontaneous experiences or escapes (Kociatkiewicz & Kostera, 2010) leaving participants as David Bowie describes in his song ‘unwashed and somewhat slightly dazed’ (Bowie, 1969, p. 1). These experiences are conducted through tribal-style gatherings or little masses clustered around points of consumer culture interest (Maffesoli, 1996). Its members distinguish themselves through a shared lifestyle and taste (Stengs, 2007). Management principles are applied to this temporary setting in order to deliver an experience appropriate to the emotional expectations of participants alongside the practical expectations of event stakeholders.

2.3.6 The Live Audience in Event Management

Performance’s only life is in the present – (Phelan, 1993)

Finally and at the heart of why an event faces unique management issues when compared with other projects is the live audience. There are several attributes to the uniqueness of the live aspect of events. These attributes have been summarised from the literature for the purposes of this study. First is the relationship between the providers and the consumers of the live
experience. The event performance consists of a level of interaction between live audience and organisers (Auslander, 2008; Phelan, 1993). Traditional management fundamentals but also the milieu or social background of the audience and how they relate to the overall experience of the event will influence this interaction (Bushee, Jung, & Miller, 2011).

1950’s Psychology literature used social interaction theory to explain the (at the time) new phenomenon of mass consumption of socially derived media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This theory suggested there was amongst live audiences the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with the performer (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This relates to this thesis through the unique relationship between event organisers and their publics existing in a live setting.

Second is the connectedness of the audience themselves. The live audience at an event will form its own community, patterns and exchanges that enhance and define the overall experience (Flichy, 1995; Ytreberg, 2009). These exchanges and connections will be unique and unrepeateable due to the temporal nature of the setting and the specific formula of the gathering. This combination becomes an expression of the group identity adopted spontaneously for that moment: ‘public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities
that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups’ (Turino, 2008, p. 87). There is further a feeling of wellbeing that is assimilated through the rhythms and movements of the group, bringing a collective bonding into being (McNeill, 1997). Carnival and festival attendees (Ehrenreich, 2006) and participants in large-scale music events (Olaveson, 2004) have experienced feelings of euphoria as they lose themselves within a larger social world. These feelings are unique and difficult to replicate (Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009; Haidt, Seder, & Kesebir, 2008).

Finally the live nature of an event and its audience reflects its authenticity (Radbourne, Johanson, Glow, & White, 2009). The live performance is not necessarily superior to the reproduced performance in the eyes of a live audience. Technologies such as large viewing screens can paradoxically enhance the audience experience, despite not being strictly live (Auslander, 2008). However, ‘live’ remains a distinctly authentic form of experience and expression, consumed ‘as it happens’ (Sundet & Ytreberg, 2009) and interpreted by both those providing the experience and those consuming it (Reason, 2004). This very particular aspect of events is conspicuous when compared with other temporary projects and is acknowledged here when considering the field of event management.
This section of the chapter has explored the parent theory of event management, including a definition. The final section concludes by exploring the research issues relating to event management.

2.3.7 Section Conclusion and Research Issue

Following an exploration of the extant literature on events and event management the following conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions have implications for event management but there is a gap in the literature on how they relate to the issues of strategic thinking and creativity. Table I identifies the main conclusions with literature source as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The social landscape for the consumption of communications is shifting (Howard, 2006; Webster, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>As this landscape shifts, events have become an increasingly popular and relevant communications form (Getz, 2000a; Flew, 2009; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Events make a social, cultural and economic contribution to societies, organizations and individuals (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, &amp; Deery, 2005; Moeran &amp; Pedersen, 2011; Allen, O'Toole, Harris, &amp; McDonnell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Events are unique when compared to other projects due to their liveness in both audience and execution (Auslander, 2008; Phelan, 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>This uniqueness has implications for event management (Bridgstock, 2005; Baum, Deery, Hanlon, Lockstone, &amp;...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This leads to the following research issue being defined and to be explored in the field: *(RI1)* *Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.*

**Figure VIII. Research Issue One (RI1) in relation to Parent Literature**
This section has explored the relevant literature and presents a conceptual definition of event management. Further to this contribution, the literature exploration has so far identified an issue for further research. This issue relates to the challenges facing event management, given changes in the communications landscape and the significance of events. There is little empirical research on this issue. This research will fill that gap. Furthermore, in order to answer the overall research question this research will explore how strategic thinking may shape the creative process applied in meeting these challenges. The next section will consider the second parent theory of the creative process in relation to the research question.

2.4 Parent Theory Two: The Creative Process

The review of the parent theory of event management in the previous section concluded that events make a significant and increasing contribution to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of societies, individuals and organisations. Much of the published work on event management focuses on what those contributions are, or could be. For example the economic contribution made to tourism destinations by events (Sherwood, 2007; Sherwood, Jago, & Deery, 2005). However, there is little guidance for event management from the literature in how such contributions are made. The focus is rather on traditional management and project management structures without consideration for the peculiarities of the live event setting.
and audience (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). How event management responds to new challenges and opportunities will depend on its performance across a range of management functions. Participation in the social, cultural and economic transformations driven by these new challenges and opportunities requires a creative approach to problem solving. Due to the competitive and creative nature of events there is a constant need for event managers to solve problems creatively. Furthermore, events can be categorized as a creative industry, generating the output required to sustain the experience, or entertainment economy (Richards & Wilson, 2006; Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008). The EMBOK model reviewed in the previous section cites creativity as a core value of event management (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). However, despite published work on the creativity of events (Goldbard, 2006; Garcia, 2010; Han, 2012; Chen, 2009), there has been little published about the creative process in event management. Understanding more about the process will fill this research gap. Explicating creative process theory will expose the issues surrounding the creative process in event management for subsequent exploration in the field.

This section is structured as follows. First, section 2.4.1 establishes the significance of creativity and the contribution made by the creative industries, including events. The dimensions of creativity from the literature
are introduced in section 2.4.2, including the dimension of the creative process and how it relates to this study. The characteristics of and influences on the creative process are then reviewed in section 2.4.3. Finally in section 2.4.4 issues for research are identified in order to explore the creative process in event management.

2.4.1 The Significance of Creativity

Creativity has been the subject of academic research for over a century and philosophical discourse since the time of ancient civilisations (Welling, 2007). The consensus across the literature is that creativity is of significance to society. From a philosophical perspective creativity is viewed as a quest for knowledge and the advancement of humankind through such knowledge (McKeon, 1973). Creativity can be universally applied across all human cultures in both a contemporary and a historical context. Since ancient times civilisations have possessed a form of creative expression through literature, art or music and in contemporary terms are able to express this creativity through scientific and technological breakthroughs (Simonton & Ting, 2010).

Creativity can in part define a civilisation: ‘to some extent we can claim that civilisations are defined by the creative geniuses who are responsible for the exceptional achievements – the great inventions, theories, philosophies,
poems, paintings, and other creative products that compose a civilisation’s intellectual and aesthetic legacy’ (Simonton & Ting, 2010). This creativity has its origins amongst the ancient Greek philosophers and later in the Industrial Revolution. For Aristotle the process of making and creating something *new and useful* was distinct from *existing* practical wisdom (Wall, 2003). Adam Smith (1776) suggested that the ingenuity of invention, combined with the skill, dexterity and judgement of labour would bring prosperity and wealth to nations and society through positive economic value (Ville, 2011; Goldbard, 2006). For psychologists, creativity is presented in the context of the individual and their cognitive approach to idea generation (Glaveanu, 2010; Runco, 2004; Hennessey, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Nijstad & Paulus, 2003; Simonton, 2003). Much has been published on the thought processes of creative individuals and how this is influenced and understood (Guilford J., 1950; Barron & Harrington, 1981). From a management perspective, creativity is viewed as leading to value creation for organisations (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Amabile, Arsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Pedersen & Burton, 2009).

Creativity is therefore perceived as having significance for societies, economies individuals and organisations (DiLiello & Houghton, 2008; George, 2007). Much of the contemporary literature is clear on how creativity is significant in its contribution but creativity remains an elusive
construct in terms of definition. Understanding more about the significance and structure of creativity will lead to a clearer understanding of the creative process in event management. There has been little exploration of the creative process in this context. The first characteristic of creativity identified from the literature is that of novelty. Creativity should generate advances by producing something novel and original (Whitehead, 1933; Amabile, 1996; Barron & Harrington, 1981; Guilford J., 1950; DiLiello & Houghton, 2008). The ideas of creative people should hold novelty outside the sphere of conventional thought. The unique idea must however also possess some appropriate use. It will require a practical application in some context in order to be creative (Amabile, 1996; DiLiello & Houghton, 2008; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

Finally creativity is subjective. Some ideas are considered more novel and useful than others. This will depend on the context and environment in which these ideas are created and expressed. Such novelty in creativity for the pursuit of useful ideas has become important for maintaining our quality of life. Einstein or Darwin’s initially abstract work has proved to have practical significance (Gruber & Wallace, 2001). Individuals and societies are inextricably linked through this creative process, each contributing to the other’s development and wellbeing. Creative imaginations establish links between activities and the answers to multi-faceted questions (Pérez-
Fabello & Campos, 2011). Creativity is concerned with how idea generation can impact on society such as through art, science or medical research (Gardner, 2006). However, creativity also occurs on a smaller but widespread scale as people try to solve day-to-day problems and challenges such as how to save household water (Gardner, 2006). Creativity in society can further be seen as a process of renewal and replacement. Creative destruction (Amin, 1994; Bullen, Robb, & Kenway, 2004; Schumpeter, 1934) occurs as creativity transforms the old into something new. The refrigerator replaces the icebox. The Apple iPod replaces the Sony cassette Walkman.

More recently, there is evidence that an emergent ‘creative class’ makes a positive contribution to businesses and communities through workplace innovation, consumption of arts and other cultural activities (Florida, 2004; Howkins, 2002). Twenty-first century developed economies increasingly value creativity over more traditional factors of production such as manufacturing (Florida, 2004; Lundvall & Johnson, 1994). This is particularly significant to this study of the creative process in event management. In knowledge and experience economies such as Australia where manufacturing has declined in favour of cheaper overseas imports there is an increased consumption of experiences and leisure activities (Kollmeyer, 2009).
2.4.1.1 Event Management as a Creative Industry

Event management as defined in the previous section is unique to a live audience, existing in a temporary setting. The performative and artistic nature of event management implies a creative medium (Auslander, 2008). The delivery of such a medium is the remit of the creative industries (Caves, 2000; Cunningham, 2002; Hartley J., 2005). The term creative industries is quite recent in the academic discourse (Cunningham, 2002). For the purposes of this thesis, event management is seen as a mode of creation for meaningful cultural experiences (Holst Kjaer, 2011). Events are in this context considered part of the creative industries. The role of event management as part of the creative industries in a knowledge-based economy such as Australia is now explained.

The term creative industries was introduced by the British Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1998 and defined as: ‘those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. This includes advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio’ (Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 1998). The term has been adopted in most developed
economies around the world to define these industries, including Australia (Cunningham, 2002; Hartley J., 2005).

Creative industries are the industrial components of the economy in which creativity is an input and content or intellectual property is the output (Cunningham, 2002; Galloway & Dunlop, 2007; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Potts & Cunningham, 2008). Furthermore, the creative industries are seen as generating the output required to sustain the experience, or entertainment economy (Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008; Richards & Wilson, 2006). Such creative industries create a ‘set of living, embodied geographies which provide a new source of value through their performative push’ (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 125). In turn, such experiences take place within and are developed by creative clusters, spaces and environments (Florida, 2004; Landry, 2000).

This notion of creative spaces applies to the unique setting in which events are situated. In these environments, ‘the impact of the imagination and fantasy becomes a major part of the conduct of business, to be traded on and turned into profit’ (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 125). Furthermore, events make a further contribution to the creative industries as nations, regions, cities and towns diversify their economies through becoming attractive event destinations (Richards G., 2010). These destinations deliver performative
experiences in unique, temporary settings to their local communities and tourist visitors (Shaw, Bagwell, & Karmowska, 2004).

This section has identified the significance of creativity and how this significance relates to event management as the subject of this study. The next section discusses the dimensions of creativity and in particular the creative process. Understanding more about the creative process from the literature will validate the relevance and significance of this process to event management.

### 2.4.2 The Dimensions of Creativity

The dimensions of creativity have been a subject of academic discourse for decades and have been discussed in a range of contexts, including business and management, sociology, philosophy and psychology. This section presents an overview of the dimensions of creativity. This overview provides the context for a more specific discussion on the creative process from the organisational, management perspective as the most relevant area of creativity in relation to event management. The creative process is identified as a method and approach to thinking and ideas. This thesis seeks to understand more about this method and approach in event management.
Thoughts on the dimensions of creativity have been widely published. The work on creativity is broadly categorised into four dimensions also known as the Four Ps of Creativity (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999; Rhodes, 1961; Simonton, 1988). These dimensions are identified in Table J and are subsequently explained.

Table J. Dimensions of Creativity from the Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity Dimension</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Creative Product – some products of ideas, designs and solutions are more creative than others.</td>
<td>(Amabile, 1996; Bruner, 1962; Runco &amp; Sakamoto, 1999; Ekvall, 1997; Paulus, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Creative Person – The protagonist involved in the creative process.</td>
<td>(Guilford J. , 1950; Martinsen, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Lubart, 1994; Lack, Kumar, &amp; Arevalo, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Creative Place – some physical and social environments will lead to more creativity than others.</td>
<td>(Drake, 2003; Florida, 2004; Negus &amp; Pickering, 2000; Scott, 2000; Grabher, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Creative Process – some methods and approaches of thinking and ideas generation will produce more creative output than others.</td>
<td>(Drazin, Glynn, &amp; Kazanjian, 1999; Gilson &amp; Shalley, 2004; Unsworth, 2001; Hall &amp; Johnson, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these dimensions is discussed in turn, culminating with the creative process, which is discussed in detail as most relevant to the study.
2.4.2.1 Creative Product

Creative products are by implication more unusual than other products. As such they deviate in some manner from a normal or ordinary solution to an issue or problem (Amabile, 1996; Sternberg, 1999). The creative product is anything that produces ‘effective surprise’ in the consumer or audience (Bruner, 1962, p. 5). In order to be creative, this product must demonstrate some form of originality (Runco & Sakamoto, 1999). This originality does not only refer to the newness of a creative product, rather also to its usefulness and value (Ekvall, 1997). The creative product is only of value if it responds to a particular problem or situation. This value is likely to exist within a specific situation and for a specific person, group or organisation (Besemer & O'Quin, 1987). For example, a system of water delivery for a desert village is unique and of value to that group and situation. It will not hold the same value for another group in another situation such as a modern city by a freshwater river. The creative product therefore is an idea, action or object held as both original and useful in a particular context (Mayer, 1999). In the context of event management, events are perceived as unique one off experiences for their audiences. Event managers must consider the originality of the final event product as of value to stakeholders and audiences (Getz, 2005). Another aspect of the creative product relates to the realisation of that product. How viable is it for the creative idea to emerge as something physically novel and useful? The capability and
capacity to transform a conceptual idea into a tangible outcome is considered when defining a product as creative or not (Paulus, 2000). One aspect of event management is the consideration of viability when applied to event ideas (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008). The project management aspects of event management as described in EMBOK (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O'Toole, & Nelson, 2006) are concerned with managing resources to realise and deliver an event outcome from an initial creative concept. As such they are relevant but little understood contributors to the creative process in event management.

2.4.2.2 Creative Person

There is much written about the dimensions of creativity (Runco, 2003; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995; Rentschler, 2001; 2002). As such it can be overlooked that despite these different dimensions, the protagonist of creativity is invariably still a person: ‘In its narrow sense, creativity refers to the abilities that are most characteristic of creative people’ (Guilford J., 1950, p. 144). The creative person in the literature is characterised by a range of specific attributes (Martinsen, 2011; King, McKee Walker, & Broyles, 1996). Personality, cognitive styles and motivation variables play a role in defining what extent a person is creative (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Lubart, 1994). From a personality perspective the literature suggests that those who are open minded about new experiences, have a desire to grow
and succeed, have a willingness to take risks and have high levels of self-esteem are more likely to be creative (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004; Martinsen, 2011). Equally an above average level of dominance, hostility and impulsiveness in creative people balances the more positive personality traits (Feist, 1999). This suggests the creative person is a contradictory and complex phenomenon. One clear view relates to the common theme of originality present across much of the literature on creativity (Lack, Kumar, & Arevalo, 2003). In this context the originality of thinking driven by the cognitive style of the individual is impacted by other factors such as external influences, milieu and personal ability (Helson, 1999; Martinsen, 2011). This originality is derived from openness to new ideas alongside divergent thinking styles (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). In the event management literature there is little or no understanding of the creative event manager. The project-based nature of event management implied in the extant literature suggests a more convergent style of thinking to achieve pre-defined goals. However, if applied to the unique live setting of an event as defined in this thesis then originality of thinking plays a more significant and relevant role. This has implications for event management and the creative process.
2.4.2.3 Creative Place

There is an attraction attached to the creative place or field (Drake, 2003). People invest effort in seeking out what they consider different to the everyday spaces they occupy. This can be for a range of reasons. First in the context of visitation, tourists and locals will visit places of creative interest such as art exhibitions or aesthetically pleasing design environments (Förster, 2009). In terms of habitation, certain communities will migrate to creative spaces to live, work and contribute (Florida, 2004). Others still will gain creative benefit from the mere suggestion of a place. The image or memory of a creative place is enough to invoke creative thought (Drake, 2003). There is a range of reasons why certain places facilitate creative ways of thinking. To be accepted and to gain influence from a more diverse community which demonstrates an original and non-conformist approach (Barron F. , 1955; Negus & Pickering, 2000). The building of networks to share ideas, to gather input from other creative persons, or to develop a team for a particular goal or project, such as is often the case in event management. The setting in which an individual or group is situated can catalyse creativity (Scott, 2000). Particular kinds of project and knowledge based workers such as those in event management and other creative industries will be attracted to these environments (Scott, 2000). There is a perception that the creative space will be a prompt for individual and group levels of inspiration and creative buzz (Syrett &
Lammiman, 1997). The space forms a backdrop for a series of collective activities all of which serve the creative purpose. Individuals are ‘surrounded by a concoction of rumours, impressions, recommendations, trade folklore’ (Grabher, 2002, p. 209) incorporating diverse thinking, new trends, ideas and fashions (Ekinsmyth, 2002). These creative networks are relevant to the more transient based collective or cluster of creative persons as they work on a project in a setting whilst connected to a temporary creative hub. This applies in event management.

In this event management context there is a further aspect of creative space in the form of the event organization. The culture of the organization will play an influencing role on the creative place (Ford, 1995; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997). However, the structure and discipline of organisations runs counterintuitive to the freedom of expression of the creative space (Seidel, Muller-Wienbergen, & Rosemann, 2010). Event organisations are often either temporary or small in order to deliver to unique, project based objectives. They may also pulsate to vary in size and scale during the event management process, as flexible resources are required (Hanlon & Jago, 2000; Toffler, 1990). This will impact on the culture and creative space.

Finally, there is also the creative space of the event itself. Due to the unique liveness of the event performance, an aspect of event management will be
the creative space within which the event creators and the event audience interact in real time. This space will influence the perception of originality and uniqueness of the event as it plays out for audiences and originators.

These three creative dimensions of *product*, *person* and *place* are all relevant to event management. Event managers are creative persons, working within creative environments. As part of the creative industries their work is also of societal and economic value. The outcome is the development of something original and useful in the form of a unique live event for a specific audience. The practice of event management requires a creative process to achieve outcomes that are both unique and beneficial. The final dimension of creativity is the major focus of this study and represents this creative *process*. Understanding more about the creative process from the literature will help define issues for research in event management.
2.4.3 The Creative Process

‘The creative process is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it. They just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things.’ – Steve Jobs (The innovation secrets of Steve Jobs: insanely different principles for breakthrough success, 2010)

In knowledge and experience based economies there is an increasing need to improve and adapt, as well as make a social and economic contribution. Creative processes are therefore an increasingly critical factor for the success and survival of creative industries such as events.

Much of the literature focuses on the nature of the creative outcome, investigating the product or place as novel or useful (Amabile, 1996). Other research scrutinizes this view suggesting that understanding the process, or drivers of creativity toward such outcomes is as valid as the outcomes themselves (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999; Gilson & Shalley, 2004; Unsworth, 2001). The creative process is the journey towards reaching such outcomes and research is focused on understanding this journey rather than the destination. The creative process is seen as the ‘engagement in creative acts, regardless of whether the resultant outcomes are novel, useful or
creative’ (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999). Such engagement in the creative process, irrespective of outcomes will involve creative persons trying new ways of going about their work. This will lead to developments in behaviour, emotional connection and cognition in order to think and act differently (Gilson & Shalley, 2004).

The creative process requires high levels of personal judgement, flexibility and autonomy (Hall & Johnson, 2009). This open-ended view of the creative process as more of an art than a science implies a paradigm that is difficult to define or standardise through traditional management processes (Hall & Johnson, 2009). The collaborative and organic nature of the process is difficult to structure when it predominantly takes place in people’s heads (Davenport, 2005). The mental and cognitive processes used in creative thought become unique as ‘principles and elements of knowledge and insights that have not been connected before’ (Ekvall, 1997, p. 195). New and viable solutions for creative and original outcomes can only emerge from activity with action. It is necessary for meetings and exchanges to take place for unknown and new information to be shared (Förster, 2009; Kristensson, Gustafsson, & Archer, 2004). This process becomes the catalyst for creative thought. Divergent thinking has been used to describe these thought processes (Guilford J. P., 1967; McCrae, 1987; Runco, 1991). Such thinking creates a flexible and unstructured platform for combining a
vision of alternative realities with the practical aspects of established and current principles. This combining and reorganising of knowledge and information to advance the thinking process and in turn to generate new ideas appears to be key to the creative process (Mumford, 2000).

This flexible and unstructured approach is hard to reconcile with the need for the predictable and repeatable processes in management (Seidel, Muller-Wienbergen, & Rosemann, 2010). Traditional management structures facilitate a straightforward and clear pathway to creative solutions but the creative process may be less conventional than this structure allows. Algorithmic tasks have a framework for solving a problem that already exists and simply requires retrieval fit into the traditional structure (Förster & Denzler, Selbst-regulation, 2006; Hilgard & Bower, 1975). Heuristic tasks on the other hand have no clearly definable or readily available solution path. As such they are open-ended and require a more divergent thinking style to produce a unique solution, such as in event management (Amabile, 1996; Gilson & Shalley, 2004).

The algorithmic instruments of project management and its application to event management through EMBOK (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) discussed in the previous section may inhibit the creative process in this context (Lundin, 2008). However, streamlining business
activities within a formalised structure may also enable more time for the creative process, which in turn can add value (Zampetakis, Bouranta, & Moustakis, 2010; De Dreu, 2010). Creating space for ideas but also a solid structure upon which the ideas can be managed to fruition has implications for management (Meusburger, Funke, & Wunder, 2009; Adler & Chen, 2011). In order to understand these implications the stages of the creative process are now explored in more detail.

2.4.3.1 Stages of the Creative Process

Although there is much published on the creative process, historical research centres upon an initial four-stage approach (Wallas, 1926). These four stages have been used as a framework by many researchers, further reinforced as ‘considerable agreement that the complete creative act involves four important steps’ (Guilford J., 1950, p. 451). There has been work published on the creative process and how it relates to design thinking (Calabretta, Montaña, & Iglesias, 2008) and design and innovation led organisations (Ilipinar, Johnston, Montaña, Spender, & Truex, 2011). The principles of this literature are that organisations adopt a bottom up approach to the creative process so that employees are empowered to think innovatively (Martin, 2011). However, given the more fluid structure of many event organisations the creative process for the purposes of this thesis has been drawn initially from the literature based on Guildford’s four traditional
stages. The four stages comprise 1. **Preparation** (definition and analysis of the problem). 2. **Incubation** (subconscious development of ideas not actively worked upon). 3. **Illumination** (enlightenment as an idea comes to fruition). 4. **Verification** (evaluation, refinement and development). In further support of the four-stage approach adopted for this thesis, the creative process in organizations has also been explained more recently using a four-stage process (Amabile, 1996). A subsequent refinement of the four stages through the *geneplore* model suggests that a range of more complex sub-processes exist around the *generation* and *exploration* stages of the creative process (Finke, Ward, & Smith, 1992). Some outcomes will be put back into the process again for further verification. Others will be rejected even at the preparation stage. Building on the *geneplore* study a more recent, comprehensive eight-stage model of the stages of the creative process has been published (Hunter, Friedrich, Bedell-Avers, & Mumford, 2007). Through viewing this creative dimension as a series of stages a greater understanding of the creative process can be developed. This eight-stage process is iterative as the initial frame of the problem takes place at the beginning of the process. At this stage many creative options may be considered. These options are subsequently refined and validated continuously through the eight stages. For the purposes of this thesis and as a further refinement to the literature on the four foundational stages of
the creative process, these eight stages are represented visually as a funnel in Figure IX.

*Figure IX. The Creative Process Funnel*

Creative options start at the top with the most relevant and refined distilled at the bottom. The top of the funnel represents the broad *construction of the problem* in stage one. Situations requiring creative ideas are often poorly defined or complex. Developing a framework for understanding the problem can enhance creative performance (Isaksen, Dorval, & Treffinger, 2010). Searching for information relevant to the creative problem commences in
stage two. *Information gathering* before generation of new ideas is more likely to produce creative output (Hunter & Cushmanbery, 2011). Given the large amount of data possibly collected by this stage, the concepts most relevant to the task can be *selected and organized* in stage three (Wierzbicki, 2007). *Combining* the relevant concepts in stage four will generate new and unique concepts for exploration (Unsworth, 2001). Once concepts have been recombined as unique then ideas can be *generated* from these unique concepts in stage five (Girotra, Terwiesch, & Ulrich, 2009). The ideas at this stage will be new but need to be *evaluated* in the context of the task during stage six so workable activities emerge (Kobayashi & Higashi, 2010). As ideas move from abstract concepts to tangible and workable actions a *plan of implementation* in stage seven is required to move towards execution (Byrne, Mumford, Barrett, & Vessey, 2009). The final and eighth stage is managing a process of feedback from the implementation of ideas. The creative process can evolve and improve as a result of such *monitoring* (Stamm, 2008).

The eight-stage creative process is particularly relevant to this thesis. While the creativity of events has been discussed in the literature (Chen, 2009; Garcia, 2010; Han, 2012), much of the published work on event management relates to activities that take place *after* the final stage of the creative process. The main body of literature on event management focuses
on event delivery rather than event conceptualization, which is presented in the literature focusing on the events themselves (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Getz, 2005; Jago & Shaw, 1998; Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O'Toole, & Nelson, 2006). However, in order to understand the creative process in event management the generality of the creative process must be considered. Does the nature of the task have an impact on the creative process? Will the creative process in event management differ from that in product design, science or other creative industries? Given there is little or no research into the creative process in event management this raises issues for exploration in the field. The sub-processes identified in the eight-stage model may have very different characteristics and influences depending on the nature of the task (Lubart, 2001). Much of the creativity literature suggests a small number of domain specific models but one size may not fit all cases (Lubart, 2001). There are often many paths to solving a complex or a simple task of cognition and therefore paths to creative outcomes may also be varied (Isaksen, Dorval, & Treffinger, 2010). In understanding these paths those variables that make the nature of the task unique will be considered here. The first consideration is the internal variables that can impact the creative process. These internal variables are described here as the characteristics of the creative process and will vary depending on the creative task, the culture of the group and the skills and
experiences of those involved in the process. The second consideration is the external variables that can impact the creative process. These external variables are described here as the *influences* on the creative process and will vary depending on the creative task and the broader environment within which the task is situated. Each of these internal and external variables is now discussed.

### 2.4.3.2 Characteristics of the Creative Process

Many characteristics of the creative process are discussed across the literature. Figure X indicates the main characteristics arising from a range of sources. They sit within the funnel as intrinsic to impacting on the creative process. They become the characteristics of that specific process depending on the task at hand and will exist to varying degrees within.
Figure X. Characteristics as Internal Variables to the Creative Process

The first characteristic of the creative process is *positivity*. Despite the inner torment cited by many artists and performers, research evidence suggests that the creative process is enjoyable and fun (Henderson, 2004). Positive emotions such as joy and excitement can expand a creative person’s range of cognitions (Amabile, Arsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Frederickson, 1998; 2001). Increasing the repertoire of feelings and actions is a component of the original thinking required in the creative process: ‘experiences of certain
positive emotions prompt individuals to discard time-tested or automatic (everyday) behavioral scripts and to pursue novel, creative, and often unscripted paths of thought and action’ (Frederickson, 1998). This positivity can also be related to the frenetic energy that can accompany the creative process. High levels of energy are often seen in creative persons, groups or organisations. This energy may be a collective feeling accompanying the accomplishment of a task or the solving of a problem. It may also simply be the nature of creative people to have higher than average levels of energy. Building on the energy of the creative process is irregularity (Steiner, 1965). This is characterised by long periods of perceived hiatus followed by large and unpredictable leaps forward. This irregular process is quite different to and distinct from those common day-to-day activities, described by Caves as the ‘humdrum inputs’ of running a project (Caves, 2000, p. 8). Furthermore such irregularity is unpredictable and difficult to manage or measure, posing challenges for management. The irregular nature of the creative process will also be coupled with an undisciplined exploration of possible creative outcomes within the eight-stage process. This exploratory characteristic will be unique to the task and creative persons and will comprise of expanding the possible options, divergent and convergent thinking to generate new solution and validation from the individual and the group in terms of idea quality. As exploration is undisciplined then a deferment of judgement over the ideas emerging is a further characteristic
of the creative process (Steiner, 1965; Osborn, 1963). This deferment is used during brainstorming to ensure that ideas go through the validation process before being rejected. The creative process further suggests expertise is required as a characteristic in the delivery of creative outcomes. This expertise often derives from the creative person but equally can come from the process itself, alongside the flexibility and imagination of the thinking and the technical and intellectual tools used.

These characteristics are typical of the creative process as internal variables but which of these are dominant will change depending on the task. For example in the writing of a novel, the characteristic of exploration may be a more emotional and erratic process than the same characteristic applied to the creative scoping of a project to build a bridge. Next the external forces exerting influence on the creative process will be discussed.

2.4.3.3 Influences on the Creative Process

There is a range of influences on the creative process, both positive and negative discussed in the creativity literature. Figure XI indicates the main influences as they arise in the published work. They sit outside the funnel as extrinsic to impacting on the creative process. They become the influences on that specific process depending on the task at hand and will exist to varying degrees both as constraints and enablers to the creative process.
The creative process is a complex interaction between people, places and situations (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffen, 1993). It can be influenced by the historical as well as current context of these factors. In terms of the creative people involved in the creative process, knowledge and skills, personality and cognitive styles will be of influence. In terms of the group more social influences can be considered. These social influences will be a combination of the various individual inputs, along with influences such as group size, group composition and group leadership style (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). These influences can be attributed to fostering a sense of trust and justice in the group as well as performance measurement and feedback on the part of
supervisors or managers (Janssen, 2005). The social network of a group or person can impact profoundly on the nature, type and frequency of their creative process (Perry-Smith, 2006). Highly localized and tightly connected networks can facilitate the creative process. However if the connectedness is too strong it may be difficult to break out from the collective mindset (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). The nature of the task as well as the perceived time constraints or time space allowed to complete the task will influence the creative process. If the group is part of a broader structure, organisational culture and the cognitive and communication styles adopted to approach the task will impact the process. Furthermore the current context of the creative task, the historical context of the group and how cohesively they work together will affect the level of perceived fear or safety associated with ideas generation. This in turn is a determinant of the level of creative contribution (George & Zhou, 2007). The creative process and the creative outcomes of that process will therefore be impacted by the internal characteristics of the creative task, persons and place. Furthermore, external forces will shape and influence the process. These impacts will make each creative process unique to the creative task at hand. The previous funnel based model can be evolved in this context and is illustrated by Figure XII as a Twister. This metaphor has been used to emphasise the unique and dynamic nature of each creative process and is subsequently explained.
The model remains a funnel through which creative options are refined. However, the subtleties of the process are determined by internal characteristics and external influences. These forces will shape and distort the funnel in unique ways and as such the funnel is represented as a twister. The internal characteristics will determine some aspects of its shape and velocity while the external influences enabling or constraining the creative process will determine other aspects of that shape and velocity. This model proposes that a creative process, whilst possessing clearly
defined stages of activity, will be highly unique and influenced by a range of forces. Given that little research has been undertaken into the creative process specifically in event management the model suggests this issue is worthy of further investigation.

2.4.4 Section Conclusion and Research Issues

Following this exploration of the extant literature on the creative process the following conclusions have been drawn.

Table K. *The Creative Process in the Literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Creativity offers significant value to individuals, organizations and societies</td>
<td>(Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Creativity is relevant to events as a creative industry</td>
<td>(Caves, 2000; Flew, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Creativity is widely published but difficult to define and is multi-dimensional and complex.</td>
<td>(Amabile, 1996; George, 2007; Zhou &amp; George, 2001; Shalley &amp; Gilson, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 One dimension of creativity is the creative process</td>
<td>(Unsworth, 2001; Hall &amp; Johnson, 2009; Drazin, Glynn, &amp; Kazanjian, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 There is some clarity from the literature on the stages and sub-processes of the creative process.</td>
<td>(Gilson &amp; Shalley, 2004; Amabile, 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Characteristics of the creative process and influences on the creative process can be applied to the unique task of each creative project, such as an event</td>
<td>(Mumford, 2000; Förster, 2009; Ekvall, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 There is little literature on understanding the characteristics of the creative process and</td>
<td>This thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These conclusions have led to the following research issue being defined for exploration in the context of event management: *(RI2) Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little or no research into the characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management.*

*Figure XIII. Research Issue Two (RI2) in relation to Parent Literature*

There are a number of dimensions of creativity but this section has focused specifically on the creative process. This is identified as a core value of event management. The stages of the creative process and the varying
internal characteristics and external influences upon it have been explicated. A considerable body of knowledge in the literature has been drawn upon to construct a conceptual model of the creative process, including published work on the creativity of events as the end product. The conclusion at this stage is that the influences and characteristics of the task at hand will impact the shape and nature of the creative process. There has been little research to date into the creative process in event management. There may be creative characteristics and influences particular to the tasks of event management. The issue identified in Figure XII suggests further investigation is required to fill this research gap, alongside considering the relationship between the creative process and strategic thinking to embrace challenges in event management. The next section will consider the final parent literature of strategic thinking in relation to the research question.

2.5 Parent Literature Three: Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking and its relationship to event management and the creative process are discussed in this section. Strategic thinking has been identified as a parent literature for this study due to its focus on analysing issues and trends in changing environments to anticipate emerging opportunities and envision alternatives (Fairholm & Card, 2009; Liedtka, 1998; Hunter & O’Shannassy, 2007; Mintzberg, 1994; Stacey, 1992; Sanders, 1998; Shelton & Darling, 2001; Whitlock, 2003).
Strategic thinking is seen as distinct from strategic planning for the purposes of this thesis (see also section 2.5.2.). Strategic planning is the process by which the alternatives envisioned by strategic thinking will be executed (Mintzberg, 1994; Raimond, 1996). The current operational focus of event management (see section 2.3) is in line with the tactical notion of strategic planning. This research question considers whether strategic thinking can be applied to the creative process as an alternative paradigm to operational thinking or strategic planning.

The first parent literature discussed in this chapter was that of event management. The changing shape of communications and the resultant possible impact on events as a creative medium were discussed. This changing media landscape has implications for event management. The second parent literature presented was the creative process. It was concerned with the journey towards new, unique and useful creative outcomes. The final parent literature discussed in this section is strategic thinking. There is an established connection between the creative process and strategic thinking as novel and useful methods are embraced to envision and meet future challenges (Graetz, 2002; Prahalad & Hamel, 1994; Heracleous, 1998; Liedtka, 1998; Mintzberg, 1994; Näsi, 1991). Strategic thinking therefore is necessary to break from existing thought processes if future challenges are to be addressed in event management.
(Handy, 1999; Mintzberg, 1994; Raimond, 1996; Teece, 2009; Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2010).

This section is structured as follows. First in section 2.5.1 the theory surrounding strategic thinking and its relevance to this thesis will be discussed. In section 2.5.2 the relationship between strategic thinking and strategic planning will be explicated. This is presented in the context of the creative process and event management from previous sections of this chapter. Finally in section 2.5.3 issues for research are identified in order to explore strategic thinking and the creative process in event management.

### 2.5.1 Strategic Thinking Theory

Strategic thinking is considered both important and a core competency within organizations (Liedtka, 1998; Mason J., 1986; Bonn, 2005). It is also however seen a major problem in terms of capability, with many managers struggling to grasp the concept of strategic thinking. Despite the recognized importance of developing the skills of strategic thinking there is no agreed definition in the literature (Gallimore, 2004; Tavakoli & Lawton, 2005; Pellegrino & Carbo, 2001). Attempts have been made however to consider and explain the key factors and aspects of strategic thinking (Mintzberg, 1994; Heracleous, 1998; Liedtka, 1998).
The term strategic thinking covers all aspects of strategy: ‘Strategic thinking extends both to the formulation and execution of strategies by business leaders and to the strategic performance of the total enterprise’ (Näsi, 1991, p. 29). In more recent literature there have been number of strategic thinking forms relating not only to the enterprise but also to the broader impacts of enterprise (Van-Gelder, 2005). In particular how strategic thinking can serve business in the dual purposes of profit making and long term social contribution (Kanter, 2011). Strategic thinking in this context can adopt a number of forms in order to support a range of competitive advantages. (McCauley, 2012). The divergent approaches afforded by strategic thinking can generate high performing business models. These models have been discussed in particular relating to blue ocean strategies (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004). Strategic thinking enables new market, product or audience opportunities to be generated with broader economic, social and cultural benefits than existing frameworks (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

In relation to the creative process strategic thinking is viewed as a synthesising activity involving ‘intuition and creativity…the outcome of strategic thinking is an integrated perspective of the enterprise, a not too precisely articulated vision of direction’ (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 109). Strategic thinking is continuously occurring and collaborative in nature, with everyone in an organisation involved in the process (Ratcliffe, 2006). Organisations
and project teams such as those in event management can embrace strategic thinking to become not a single firm but an ecosystem connected to other industries and environments. In doing so they benefit from more holistic, future focused and integrated approach (Cheng, Dainty, & Moore, 2005). Creative outcomes through strategic thinking can evolve from qualitative approaches (Daft & Lengel, 1986), analogies and non-linear perspectives (Lawrence L., 1999; Sanders, 1998; Stacey, 1992). This reinforces the heuristic approach to the creative process outlined in the previous section as relevant to event management. Strategic thinking is increasingly seen as valuable to organisational success, highlighted as a required attribute in leaders (O'Connell, 2009). The creative, people oriented and participative aspects of strategic thinking are perceived to be of more rational value (i.e. influential on performance) than traditional management tools such as those outlined earlier in this chapter (Hunter & O'Shannassy, 2007). This has relevance to event management where the theory suggests the application of traditional management processes, despite the unique form and setting of events. There are many variations on the theme of strategic thinking in the literature, although most are in agreement with the notion of strategic thinking as a holistic, collaborative and creative process (Mintzberg, 1994; Liedtka, 1998; Handy, 1999; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; O'Shannassy, 2003; Bonn, 2005; Pisapia, 2009). This is relevant to the themes raised in this thesis.
The alternatives proposed in the literature consider the key elements of strategic thinking and how they influence the stakeholders involved. Each of the main elements is now considered in turn.

2.5.1.1 The Mental Model

In this model strategic thinking is seen as a particular way of thinking (Liedtka, 1998). There are five key attributes of such thinking:

- Systems Perspective
- Intent Focused
- Intelligent Opportunism
- Thinking in Time
- Hypothesis Driven

The *systems perspective* proposes strategic thinkers have a complete mental picture of the systems that generate value in an organisation. An understanding of how the world works (Senge, 1990) can support such thinking from both the internal and external perspective of the organisation. This corresponds to the unique challenges faced in event management alongside the internal and external variables of the creative process. An *intent focus* can enable organisations to focus on realising the higher level ‘imagining’ activated by strategic thinking. Intent can further evoke a sense of discovery, direction and destiny to be energised about future possibilities.
(Prahalad & Hamel, 1994). This positivity is a characteristic of the creative process and has implications for event management. Intelligent opportunism relates to the strategic thinker’s ability to adapt to change and opportunities as they arise to make the most of external forces upon them (Burgelman, 1991). Such envisioning can enable event managers to embrace future challenges creatively. Thinking in time ensures that any strategic thought is made with a realistic view of the resources and skills available. This includes learning from past experiences and evaluating the status quo to make an informed decision about future activities, in line with the eight-stage model of the creative process (Neustadt & May, 1986). Finally, thinking driven by hypothesis, with scenario based planning in a similar vein to the scientific method involves a combination of critical and creative thinking. This again encourages a more holistic approach to considering the future. This model incorporates a wide range of aspects of strategic thinking with the key focus on the attitudinal and intangible aspects.

2.5.1.2 The WhyWhatHowWho Model

This model poses four simple and distinct questions in the context of strategy (Abell, 1980). Who will be served by the organisation (customers and other stakeholders)? What will be offered (products and services)? How will what is offered be created and provided? The why question has been added to this context as a component of strategic thinking (Fairholm & Card,
Posing this question helps thinkers to understand why things work the way they do and why they may need to change them for the future. The posing of the why, what, how and who questions generates a clearer picture of what should, could, can and cannot be done within the contexts of a sector or organisation. The creative process in event management must consider ideas in the context of execution-able reality but also as uniquely relevant to live, unpredictable audiences and stakeholders. Strategic thinking relates to understanding that the world may not always work in linear, methodological ways. Organisations and those working within them must be agile, flexible and relationship savvy as they continually adapt plans to meet emergent, even ambiguous situations (Abrahamson, 1996; Frost & Egri, 1994; Fairholm & Card, 2009).

2.5.1.3 The Learning Model

The learning model suggests that strategic thinking involves a process of learning through utilising systems thinking, reflection, and reframing skills (Pisapia, Reyes-Guerra, & Coukos-Semmel, 2005). These skills are interrelated and complementary thought processes that sustain and support one another. The model suggests lower levels of learning such as acceptance of frames of reference will only result in incremental adaptation and change (Heracleous, 1998). These adaptive skills will lead to coping with existing frameworks rather than embracing new solutions (Senge,
1990). Event management principles in the literature are focused on coping with such existing processes. Through higher level learning these frames of reference and norms are challenged and questioned (Heracleous, 1998). Generative approaches require a creative process and new ways of looking at the world (Senge, 1990).

2.5.1.4 The Systems Model

The view of strategic thinking as a holistic process that encompasses the entire organisation or group is well documented. The systems model suggests that strategic thinking is the starting point for an entire strategic management process. This process is focused on problem solving but is an end-to-end system of thinking: ‘strategic thinking combines creativity and analysis which facilitates a problem solving or hypothesis oriented approach’ (O'Shannassy, 2003, p. 57).

This theory encourages the integration of the silos of management activity into one interconnected system so the bigger picture can be viewed from all angles. How different problems are related and connected to one another can help provide more strategic solutions to complex problem areas (Liedtka, 1998). The challenge with this theory is that it requires a distance from the day-to-day operations to see the issues (Garratt, 1995; Bonn, 2001; 2005). This is not always practical or realisable. In creative industries
where resources are tight, structures non-traditional and there are a lot of process grey areas this is particularly challenging.

2.5.1.5 The Creative Model

Strategy is concerned with the development of new solutions to existing problems that will create competitive advantage. Strategic thinking is distinct from other forms of thinking in that is involves the bigger picture. The focus is on envisioning more effective ways of doing things to embrace future challenges and change. As such strategic thinkers can be viewed as creative thinkers. The creativity literature discussed in the previous literature was also concerned with the notion of the novel, useful and realisable. These concepts relate well to the objectives of strategic thinking ‘without creativity we are unable to make full use of the information and experience that is already available to us and is locked up in old structures, old patterns, old concepts, and old perceptions’ (De Bono, 1996, p. 17).

Creativity is therefore identified as an important part of strategic thinking (Steiner, 1965; Atkinson & Easthope, 2009; Runco, 2004; Nayak, 2008; Brockmann & Anthony, 1988). The influences and characteristics of the creative process mentioned in the last section will in turn impact on the level of strategic thinking: ‘an atmosphere in which strategic ideas can be freely championed and fully contested by anyone with relevant information or
insight may be a key factor in developing internal selection processes that maximize the probability of generating viable organizational strategies (Burgelman, 1991, p. 252).

2.5.1.6 The Leadership Model

In similar terms to the creative process, one influence on strategic thinking is organizational culture. An inappropriate cultural environment will diminish the creative, intuitive and divergent process of strategic thinking. Leadership plays a prominent role in establishing or transforming organizational culture in order for strategic thinking to thrive (Antonakis, Ashkanasy, & Dasborough, 2009; Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003; Wheatley, 2006; Yukl & Becker, 2006). Culture is considered a primary function of the leader. This function distinguishes leaders from managers as the culture sets the framework within which management will act (Schein, 2004). The main behaviours of strategic leaders focus around strategy formulation and the subsequent communication and monitoring of this strategy. The literature suggests that leaders are not always equipped for such strategic leadership styles (Goldman & Casey, 2010). There are six habits associated with strategic leadership (Pisapia, 2009). These are the cognitive skills of the leader, their ability to be sensitive to wider strategic issues, communication in divergent and holistic language, ability to set a minimum framework for achieving strategic objectives, making change in incremental steps.
palatable to stakeholders and overall fitness for the purpose of the strategic task. Leaders in creative industries such as events will be required to set a cultural framework to respond more strategically to emerging challenges.

Strategic thinking is thinking in time through connecting the past, present and future (Neustadt & May, 1986). This process has been described as ‘acting thinkingly’ (Weick, 1983, p. 225). Previous thinking and experience as well as consideration of a range of alternative options to be applied to future thinking can inform actions. In this context there is clear alignment between strategic thinking and the creative process. The creative process is concerned with the new, useful and realisable. Strategic thinking is action oriented, focused on how to resolve ambiguity and make sense of a complex world. Event management is a complex and unpredictable world, demanding unique and emotional solutions for live, temporary audiences. The next section will focus on how strategic thinking is distinct from other areas of strategic management and as such is the most relevant to this thesis.

2.5.2 Strategic Thinking, Strategic Planning and the Creative Process

‘Even with an ideal planning process, strategic thinking still requires the creative acts of synthesis and choice’ — (Burgelman, 1991, p. 28)
There is a distinction made between strategic thinking and strategic planning as two components in the strategic management of an organisation. This is significant for the purposes of this thesis on event management. Strategic planning is seen as an operationally based management function. The current operational focus of event management as outlined earlier in this chapter is in line with the characteristics of strategic planning. Strategic thinking is seen as a more holistic and creative function (French, 2009; Shelton & Darling, 2001; Whitlock, 2003). This distinction is further emphasised by the differing deployment of each. Strategic planning is viewed as the realisation machine. It is intelligent, hard-edged and information based for the achievement of pre-determined objectives (Mintzberg, 1994; Raimond, 1996). Strategic thinking is about the creative imagination. It takes a softer edged approach based around values, culture and broader information sources or synthesising processes, utilising intuition and creativity (Mintzberg, 1994; Raimond, 1996). A literature review by Kevin Gallimore provides evidence of a consensus in the strategy literature that creativity is an essential element of both strategic planning and strategic thinking (Gallimore, 2007). The nature of the creative process as a method of conceptualisation outlined earlier in this chapter is in line with the characteristics of strategic thinking. This relates in particular to the temporary, unique and creative nature of event management.
However, like the theory on the creative process, the two disciplines of thinking and planning are actually much more interrelated with both necessary for effective envisioning of alternatives (Heracleous, 1998; Hussey, 2001; Liedtka, 1998). In the creative process theory, value is attributed to ideas that are achievable as well as novel and useful. Strategic planning is used to realise the strategies and initiatives imagined through strategic thinking (Pisapia, 2009). The common direction is established through strategic thinking and strategic planning is used to follow up the details as ‘a dialectical framework within which strategic planning and strategic thinking work in tandem, rather than one in which strategic planning impedes the flourishing of strategic thinking’ (Lawrence E., 1999, p. 13). This relationship between strategic planning, thinking and the creative process is significant in order to understand the issues emerging for research. Figure XIV has been developed from the theory for this thesis on event management. It identifies conceptually how the creative process can be applied to both planning and thinking.
Figure XIV. The Relationship between the Creative Process, Strategic Planning and Thinking

The model is illustrated by a series of iterative stages alongside the creative process. Central to the model is the creative process as defined in this thesis. The eight stages of the process are summarised as ideas move from the *imagination* phase of strategic thinking through to the *realisation* phase of strategic planning. Strategic thinking is proposed as the starting point for the creative process in event management. The question ‘what if?’ is raised through the divergent and imaginative style of strategic thinking. This question is then *conceptualised* and validated through the creative process to define and frame the precise nature of the task through answering the
question ‘what is?’ Finally the realisation processes of strategic planning enable answers to the question ‘how to?’ These more tactical implementation planning and monitoring phases of the creative process are managed through strategic planning. This model synthesizes the relationship between strategic thinking and the creative process. Further it proposes exploration of how this synthesis relates to event management. The next section identifies the research issues emerging from this explication of theory.

2.5.3 Section Conclusion and Research Issues

Following this exploration of the extant literature on strategic thinking, the following conclusions have been drawn.

Table L. Section Conclusion from Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is an established link between strategic thinking and the creative process as a holistic approach to envisioning alternative solutions to challenges</td>
<td>(Mintzberg, 1994; Ratcliffe, 2006; Teece, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Strategic thinking is viewed as significant to organizational success but there are a number of definitions in theory and applications in practice</td>
<td>(Liedtka, 1998; Handy, 1999; O'Connell, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There is a range of models for strategic thinking relating to creativity, systems, learning and leadership. These models are also relevant to the traditional management processes and</td>
<td>(Senge, 1990; Liedtka, 1998; Fairholm &amp; Card, 2009; Frost &amp; Egri, 1994; Pisapia, Reyes-Guerra, &amp; Coukos-Semmel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisations in event management theory</td>
<td>2005; O’Sullivan, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Strategic thinking is seen as distinct from strategic planning. The former is concerned with creativity and imagination while the latter is concerned with the practical realization</td>
<td>(Heracleous, 1998; Mintzberg, 1994; Raimond, 1996; Liedtka, 1998; Steiner, 1965; Runco, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The creative process acts as an interface between the imagination of strategic thinking and the realization of strategic planning. This enables creative outputs which are realizable as well as useful and novel</td>
<td>(Burgelman, 1991; Pisapia, 2009; Weick, 1983; French, 2009; Whitlock, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The theory on event management suggests an operational dominance through strategic planning, rather than a more holistic approach through strategic thinking and then realized through planning</td>
<td>(Getz, 2000b; Jago &amp; Shaw, 1998; Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, &amp; Nelson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These conclusions have led to the following final research issue being defined for exploration in the context of event management:

(RI3) Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus.
The relationship between the creative process and strategic thinking has been explored in this section. The literature suggests a close connection as both are concerned with the novel, the useful and the imaginative. There are a number of forms of strategic thinking explored in the literature that may be applicable to the temporal nature of event management. Strategic planning and strategic thinking are seen as distinct. However, this exploration has identified a complementary relationship between strategic thinking as imagination and strategic planning as realisation of the ideas derived from that imagination. The creative process connects the novel concepts derived from strategic thinking with the useful application of strategic planning. This
is relevant for this investigation into applying strategic thinking to the creative process in event management and has led to the development of the third and final research issue. The three research issues are now synthesised concluding with a conceptual framework for further empirical exploration.

2.6 Research Issues emerging from the Literature

The three parent literatures explicated through this review have established interconnectivity. These relationships have created unique issues for exploration in the field and contribution to knowledge. Event management has been defined for the purposes of this thesis. The to date little explored challenges facing events as a creative industry have been highlighted as a research issue. The unique characteristics of and influences on the creative process have been highlighted. These characteristics and influences may change in specific settings. While audiences and organisers perceive event experiences as creative, the creative process in event management has been little explored. Furthermore this creative process is linked to strategic thought as a method of envisioning alternative futures to meet challenges. How strategic thinking can be applied to the creative process in event management has been little researched. This is despite the significance of events and calls for greater understanding of the core values of event management. Event managers are increasingly under pressure to optimise
a strategic competitive advantage for their events to create a sustainable point of difference (Pegg & Patterson, 2010). Environmental and economic factors create new pressures for event management after a period of sustained growth (Jones, 2012). This climate may influence increased divergent thought and potential consultation and collaboration within the sector (Devine & Devine, 2012). Through exploring the convergence of these three parent literatures of event management, the creative process and strategic thinking an original contribution can be made.

Table M summarises the three parent literatures and contributing authors, alongside the three emerging issues for research in the field.
Table M. Table summarising Research Issues derived from the Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Literature</th>
<th>Theories in Extant Literature</th>
<th>Main Authors</th>
<th>Research Methods Used</th>
<th>Emerging Research Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Management</td>
<td>Events make an increasingly significant contribution to societies, individuals and organisations. Event management is an emerging research area with burgeoning publications but is not clearly defined. Much of the theory is derived from project management literature. However, event management faces unique challenges compared to other areas. Although event organisations can exist as long-term structures, one unique attribute of event management is a live audience in a specific and temporary setting. This has only been considered in some of the theory.</td>
<td>Getz, Goldblatt, Jago, Harris, O Toole, Deery, Shone &amp; Parry, Allen</td>
<td>Literature Review Conceptual Quantitative empirical</td>
<td>(RI1) Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creative Process</td>
<td>While events are creative in nature and context, there is little published work on the creative process in event management. Creative process is the journey to develop novel, useful and realisable outcomes. There</td>
<td>Amabile, Sternberg, Florida, Caves</td>
<td>Literature Review Qualitative empirical Quantitative</td>
<td>(RI2) Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Literature</td>
<td>Theories in Extant Literature</td>
<td>Main Authors</td>
<td>Research Methods Used</td>
<td>Emerging Research Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking</td>
<td>Established link between strategic thinking and the creative process. Little published work on strategic thinking in event management. The broader parent literature of strategic thinking indicates a distinction between thinking and planning. The creative process acts as an interface between the disciplines to deliver useful, novel and realisable outcomes. This paradigm has not been applied to event management which is operationally focused.</td>
<td>Mintzberg Liedka Handy Senge French Pisapia</td>
<td>Literature Review Conceptual Organisational Qualitative empirical Quantitative empirical Longitudinal</td>
<td>(RI3) Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are characteristics and influences of the creative process that may be unique to the context and task at hand. Little is understood about these characteristics and influences in event management, despite the significance of events as an experiential medium and arguably as such a creative industry.</td>
<td>Chen Zhou &amp; George Flew Csikszentmihalyi</td>
<td>empirical Conceptual Longitudinal</td>
<td>or no research into the characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Chapter Conclusion and Theoretical Framework

Figure XVI. Conceptual Model of Strategic Thinking and Creativity in Event Management

Figure XVI illustrates how the three parent literatures converge to create a unique contribution. The conceptual framework derived from the literature and to be explored in the field suggests an aligned and equal relationship between strategic thinking, the creative process and event management. This leads to a strategically led creative process complemented by the operational requirements particular to each event. This theoretical framework will be considered in the field through the three research issues.
The next chapter describes the research method used to explore these issues.
3 Research Method

‘The meanings attached to events have yet to be explored in any great depth, and illustrates how the use of ethnography in a diverse range of these areas provides extensive opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the nature and meanings of event experiences for visitors, participants or organizers’ — (Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010, p. 79)

This thesis uses a longitudinal case study supported by other broader industry dialogue to study strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. The study is interpretive in nature and embraces an ethnographic and participatory style. The research examines the key issues through immersion in the field of practice using a case study framework. The previous chapter identified three research issues from the literature on event management, strategic thinking and the creative process. This chapter focuses on the philosophy, approach and method of the research undertaken. The research examines the issues identified in order to answer the research question: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’

Figure XVII describes the outline of this chapter. Following a short introduction and recap of the research issues in section 3.1
philosophical underpinnings of the research methodology are introduced and discussed in section 3.2. Section 3.3 details the chosen research approach derived from this philosophy. In section 3.4 the specific methods used in the research are presented. Finally, section 3.5 concludes and summarises the chapter.

Figure XVII. Chapter 3 Structure

3.1 Introduction

Explicating the literature has identified three gaps in event management research as illustrated through the three research issues in Table N (see also conceptual model in chapter 2). These research issues are presented alongside the supporting parent literature and are then explained.

Table N. Research Issues and Parent Literatures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Issue</th>
<th>Parent Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI1</td>
<td>Event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI2</td>
<td>The creative process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management through the Event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

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Research issue one is concerned with the lack of understanding of the challenges facing event management practice, despite its increasing significance in society and for organisations and individuals. Second although event management is a creative industry and creativity is viewed as a core value through the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK), little is understood about the characteristics of and influences on the creative process in event management. This is represented in research issue two. Finally, much of the literature portrays event management as operational in focus, based on closed model management systems. However, event management faces creative challenges to facilitate original experiences for live audiences in unique settings. In the literature strategic thinking is closely aligned to creativity as problem alternatives are envisioned. This study proposes that strategic thinking offers an alternative paradigm to complement operational planning in driving the creative process in event management. This has led to research issue three.
Strategic thinking and the creative process are predominantly intellectual inputs, which result in cultural outputs, as outlined in chapter 2. They are intellectual in that they draw upon existing knowledge and experience to generate new ideas, concepts and solutions to problems. They are cultural in that they are influenced by the culture in which they develop and in turn contribute to that culture in the expression of art forms, scientific progress, societal and political ideologies and economic wellbeing. This thesis addressed the gap in the literature through a research design and method that explored and subsequently discussed these issues identified as significant to event management. The research methodology chosen to explore these issues is now explained.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research methodology of this thesis was aligned with the nature of the question and research issues raised (Dainty, 2007; McCallin, 2003). This philosophical underpinning supported and guided the chosen investigative process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This thesis investigated strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. The idea of this question originated from an established view of the world identified from the literature. The interpretation of this question originated from a new, research driven view of the world. The setting for the study was Melbourne, Australia.
to investigate strategic thinking and the creative process in event management.

The study was driven by the little-researched phenomena of strategic thinking and the creative process in the context of event management. The world was represented by the social, cultural and organisational practice identified as event management and as such was specific in context (see parent theory in chapter 2 and event research setting in chapter 4). However the phenomena of strategic thinking and the creative process were less tangible (see parent literatures in chapter 2). These phenomena implied a setting that is social and subjective. This led to a qualitative research approach. ‘Qualitative research is peculiarly appropriate to…investigations focusing on the psychological or personal experiences of human subjects’ (Morse & Mitcham, 2002, p. 34). Furthermore, research into the social and subjective activities of identified practice groups is predominantly qualitative in nature. ‘Deep’ understanding arises in qualitative researchers’ claims to have entered and mapped such territories as ‘inner experiences’, ‘language’, ‘cultural meanings’ or ‘forms of social interaction’ (Silverman, 2006, p. 89). This can support as well as contribute to existing literature in the field, as qualitative research is no longer considered as provisional. It maintains a body of knowledge both usable and cumulative (Silverman, 2000). Uniqueness to the research area and rationale for such an approach
were further justified by the lack of qualitative research in the field of event management (Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010; Robson, 2008; Getz, 2000b; Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006).

Traditionally, event management research has been focused on the economic and environmental impact of events using a more measurement based quantitative approach (Jago, Fredline, Raybold, & Deery, 2005). It is argued that the line of enquiry in this thesis contributed empirically to existing knowledge. This contribution was made through qualitative exploration of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. This qualitative framework enabled research participants to express their experiences and views with clarity and openness. Qualitative work such as interviews with event managers and producers have been used in prior event studies (Getz & Fairley, 2004). However, little research has been carried out in the context of the combined parent literatures outlined in this thesis.

The research was an interactive process between the researcher and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Within the interpretive context a constructivist paradigm was adopted (Buchanan & Bryman, 2009). This interpretive research philosophy explores how a general view can be applied in practice. For this research it was reinforced by the issues arising
from the literature and interpreted through field research. Relativist ontology suggests this setting has a range of realities shaped by the researcher’s own experience, history, gender and social class or race i.e. the ‘hunch’ that led to the research question and the subsequent research issues identified from the literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The question was developed and elaborated through the literature. Research issues were derived from this literature search to be interpreted from the field data. How could the interpretive nature of this research be embedded in real-life practice, leading to the reflection of practitioners and how they make sense of their lives? In this case their approach to strategic thinking and the creative process in event management? Most of the time we work in a state of unawareness of our actions: why did I say that to a colleague? Where did that idea come from? Our sense of what is right comes predominantly from our previous experience rather than the theories we have learnt. Knowledge can support this only if connected to the lives we are leading and the experiences we are having. The lives and experiences in this context related to event management. The experiences were focused on the creative process and whether strategic thinking is or could be applied.
To recap the central research question was as follows: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’

There was a set of assumptions accompanying this central question. The first assumption was that event management is carried out predominantly in groups or organisations. The complexity of event management tasks normally requires the resources of more than one individual, despite the often-shifting size and scope of many event project groups (see chapter 2). The second assumption was that characteristics of and the influences on the creative process are unique to the context of the creative group and task. This was identified from the literature. As such this process was studied in specific cultural settings such as within organisations or project groups. The final assumption was that there is an interaction between the subjects of the research and the researcher as part of the exploratory process. As such, the research methodology was qualitative in nature based around a constructivist paradigm. The next section discusses the approach used within this philosophical framework to explore the three main research issues and answer the research question.

3.3 Research Approach

The chosen constructivist research paradigm operates using mainly qualitative methods (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Wiersma, 2000; Creswell,
The naturalistic nature of this qualitative research suggests the study of things in their natural settings. Attempts are made to make sense of phenomena in this context in terms of the meanings people assign to them (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality as they interact with their social worlds (Merriam, 2009). There is a range of possible qualitative approaches to explore such realities in order to investigate the research issues identified in this study. There is little consensus in theory as to how they should be classified due to the ‘baffling number of choices or approaches’ (Creswell, 2007, p. 6). However, many of the approaches are cited as similar to one another with a degree of philosophical and practical alignment. This thesis summarises these approaches around four forms of qualitative research. In order to establish the most appropriate approach for the purposes of this thesis, these four forms are briefly explored before the chosen approach of ethnography is explained in more detail, with justification for the choice.

The first form is phenomenology (Conklin, 2007). This research approach focuses on depicting the essence of an experience or feeling. It is often used in the study of intense and emotional human experiences (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The objective of phenomenology is a description of the phenomenon under study in order to ‘understand better what it is like for someone to feel like that’ (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 46). This was considered
as inappropriate for this study as the research issues were focused on understanding and exploring approaches to strategic thinking and the creative process in a specific setting. The foci of phenomenology lie rather in intense human feelings and experiences.

Second is narrative analysis (Downing, 2005). This approach uses stories written by research subjects as data. First person accounts of experiences are told in story form and comprise the traditional narrative characteristics of a beginning, middle and end. The text as data are analysed hermeneutically for the meaning it has for the author (Aguinis, Pierce, Bosco, & Muslin, 2009). Narrative analysis relies on the ability of the research subject to articulate meaning in a story form. The symbolic setting of such stories may be relevant for research to understand the folklore extant in organisational culture (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004). However, this research form was not appropriate in the context of this research on the application of processes within an organisational culture.

Third is grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data in this approach are used to develop a theory that emerges from or is grounded in the data itself. Grounded theory assumes no theoretical or conceptual framework before field research is undertaken. In the context of this study a conceptual framework for strategic thinking and the creative process was
developed for exploration in the field. As such grounded theory is not an appropriate research form.

The final research approach is *ethnography* (Brewer, 2000). The exploratory nature of the research combined with the need to immerse the researcher in an organisational or cultural ‘world’ setting led to this as the chosen approach for this thesis. Ethnography is utilised as a research tool to provide rich insights into the actions and views of a particular group in a particular setting (Cassell & Symon, 2004). This is appropriate in the context of this study. Understanding the beliefs, values and attitudes that structure the behaviour patterns of a specific group of people is at the heart of ethnographic research. This approach was therefore used to explore the research issues in this thesis and is now explained in detail. For the purpose of this study the principles of ethnography were applied within a case study framework. Using ethnography, the complexities of meaning and difference within a case study environment could be interpreted more clearly over time (Sørensen, 2003) (O’Brien, 2006).

### 3.3.1 Ethnography

The main objective of ethnographic research is to observe and document perspectives and practices to get inside the way a group of people sees the world (Hammersley, 2006). The validity of the work is based on the
interaction with the subjects of the study and the resultant cultural, social or organisational insight gained (Sorenson, 2003). This study of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management was appropriately situated in a case study applying ethnographic techniques. The case study selection with which to apply the ethnographic approach was based on a number of criteria. The longitudinal case study in particular was undergoing organisational restructuring in relation to its creative process in event management. This was useful in interpreting the range of issues relating to the research. (Reid & Kambayya, 2009; O'Brien, 2006).

Ethnography has its roots in social and cultural anthropology, with respect for the human aspects of the world under scrutiny as relevant to this study. The Chicago School (Barley, 1989; Deegan, 2001) used ethnographic approaches to observe the activities of workers in particular organisations such as railways, police departments and prisons (Cassell & Symon, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Whyte, 1955; Becker, 1997; Hersey, 1932) investigated emotions in the workplace and the Hawthorne studies focused on informal social interaction in organisations (Cassell & Symon, 2004; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939; Roy, 1952; 1953; 1954). There is recognition in ethnography that it is impossible to develop a complete understanding of human behaviour (Van Maanen, 1988; Prus, 1996). Ethnography therefore acknowledges the unpredictability and complexity of
human interactions such as those in event management. The way to explore and understand these interactions is to involve oneself in the group dynamic. The immersion of the researcher in the culture and context of the study is essential in order to gain a rich understanding of the issues (Prus, 1996). The features of ethnography are detailed in Table O adapted from (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; Hammersley, 2006).

**Table O. Features of Ethnography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ethnography focuses on the ‘real world’ context for the collection and analysis of empirical data.</td>
<td>(Hammersley, 2006; Sørensen, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The research is usually sited in a particular location or social group and is conducted over a sustained time period</td>
<td>(Deegan, 2001; Cassell &amp; Symon, 2004; Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The main objective is to make sense of particular instances from the perspective of participants.</td>
<td>(Prus, 1996; Atkinson &amp; Hammersley, 1998; Hammersley, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Data are gathered from a range of sources, including observation and both structured and unstructured conversations.</td>
<td>(Brewer, 2000; Cassell &amp; Symon, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The focus is on a small group or small number of groups. This can be a community, organisation or even an individual.</td>
<td>(Cassell &amp; Symon, 2004; Roy, 1954)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Data analysis involves interpreting the meanings of human actions. It is mainly presented as descriptive and explanatory.</td>
<td>(Van Maanen, 1988; Prus, 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Statistical or quantitative data are either not used at all or plays a subordinate role to the qualitative work.</td>
<td>(Sorensen, 2003; Atkinson &amp; Hammersley, 1998; Hammersley, 2006)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
There was a range of advantages to the use of ethnographic principles applied to a case study within the context of this research. The case study approach was selected based on the information-oriented selection advocated by Flyvbjerg (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This maximises the use of in-depth information from a small sample or a single case. First, it enabled immersion in the setting of event management. This supported the generation of a rich understanding of the social interplay between subjects and provided insight into its various contexts. Secondly, being ‘in the world’ of the subjects further supported observation of covert behaviours not usually shared outside of the observed group. Finally, the process of developing broad social accounts of behaviour and interaction also helped to explore phenomena, which may at first glance not have seemed connected. This was applicable to this interpretive study of strategic thinking, the creative process and the interplay between these phenomena.

3.3.2 Limitations of Ethnography

The key rationale behind the ethnographic approach taken in this study was the notion of immersion in the practice of event management in Melbourne, Australia in order to explore the three research issues. However, it must be recognised that there were limitations to this approach. Access to participants and organisations was challenging, especially over a sustained period. Furthermore, there was a concern amongst subjects that they or
their organisation may be presented negatively. Ethnography is reliant on a reflexive process on the part of the researcher. The relationship between the ethnographer, the world under study and the interplay of subjects it described. Prolonged access and openness on the part of both subject and researcher were therefore essential. Intimate familiarity through prolonged interaction with people in their everyday lives is the way ethnographic researchers can come close to comprehending the mindsets and behaviours of their subjects (Giddens, 1976). Triangulation of data was also important in order to enhance the quality of the results. What people said about how they behave and their actions may be in contrast so the approach accounted for this.

There have been criticisms of ethnography in terms of the reliability of data (Brewer, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It is suggested that the results are too unstructured, open ended and influenced by the researcher to be seen as valid (Adler & Adler, 1998; Cassell & Symon, 2004). The language used by subjects may be open to interpretation (Bryman, 1988) or the meanings of the language may be elusive (Polkinghorne, 2005; Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003). The postmodern view of ethnography is as ‘naive realism.’ How can the world ‘as it is’ be applied universally? (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; Cassell & Symon, 2004; Denzin, 1997; Poster, 1990). There is further the issue of validity (Cassell & Symon, 2004). How valid and reliable can a
selective ethnographic approach be if it is not a neutral view of the social ‘world’ in question? (Burawoy, et al., 2000). This inner conflict can be described as ‘tension between participant and analytic perspectives’ (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4) and was considered in the research methods.

The nature of the investigation was also considered. The intangible and social, unpredictable nature of strategic thinking and the creative process implied that no knowledge is absolutely certain. However, if a codified approach was applied and the appropriate rigorous guidelines used then the results ought to be judged in terms of their likely truth (Brewer, 1994; Cassell & Symon, 2004; Hammersley, 1990; 1992; Silverman, 1989; Stanley, 1990). This notion of post-postmodern ethnography (Cassell & Symon, 2004; Hammersley, 2006; Zickar & Carter, 2010) advocates the possibility and desirability of a triangulated and systematic approach to method and data collection. The application of such rigour to this traditionally naturalist research approach has led to a resurgence in the adoption of ethnography in organisational research: ‘Further and deeper consideration of the spirit of workplace ethnography will result in organisational research that has a deeper understanding of the worldviews participants bring to research studies as well as better recognition of our own personal assumptions that limit our research (Zickar & Carter, 2010, p. 316).
In summary the ethnographic approach was applicable to the research objectives but limitations were considered and addressed. A range of methods were applied in order to enter the world under study with eyes wide open, taking a pragmatic approach to the research. This triangulation alongside codification of data minimised but considered the limitations of the approach. Furthermore the study was longitudinal (Filer & Pollard, 2007; Ritchie & Smith, 1991). This overcame the limitations of a temporal or ‘ahistorical perspective’ (Hammersley, 2006, p. 5). The use of ethnography was therefore appropriate for this study, but with consideration for the limitations of any research approach. The research methods for this thesis were centred on this ethnographic approach, utilising multiple activities. These research methods are now explained in detail.

3.4 Research Methods

The predominant methods used in ethnographically based case study research emphasise the first hand study of what people do and say in particular contexts. The world in which this study was situated is described in detail in chapter 4. For the purposes of this research, a range of appropriate methods was adopted to support later triangulation of the data. The limitations of using an ethnographic approach were balanced with the benefits and appropriateness of this approach to the research for this thesis. Using a systematic approach to the data collection and multiple methods
negated many of the drawbacks and maximised the benefits. This was achieved by immersing the researcher in the world of event management. This immersive and longitudinal approach is identified in this thesis as the *ethnographic journey*.

The three research issues were investigated during the ethnographic journey. This journey incorporated the time variable (as a longitudinal study) and a range of methods. These methods are illustrated in Figure XVIII and subsequently explained in detail.

*Figure XVIII. The Ethnographic Journey*
The range of methods and stages of the ethnographic journey are supported conceptually in the literature (Hammersley, 2006; Hine, 2000; Sorenson, 2003). These stages are introduced here and subsequently explained in detail.

First there was a *longitudinal immersion* in the world of the study through ongoing, open-ended interaction with practitioners in informal settings (which gained a broader perspective and maintained immersion). Second, *exploratory semi-structured depth interviews* were conducted with two case organisations (which established industry context). Third, there was a major *longitudinal study* with one identified case organisation (which enabled comprehensive descriptions of phenomena). Within this setting *participant observation* took place (to observe what people did and said in a specific context). Study of *documentation* from the identified longitudinal setting such as planning and strategy documents, websites, communications material, internal memoranda, and press releases provided further insight. There was a *first stage of semi-structured interviews* with participants in the longitudinal setting (to understand individual perspectives in the lead up to the event). Finally a *second stage of semi-structured interviews* with participants took place in the longitudinal setting (to revisit individual perspectives after the event).
The objective was to build up a detailed picture of the places, people and resources located in the world of event management over time (Sarangi, 2006; Sarangi, 2007). This process of sustained engagement with different data sources enabled a comprehensive description (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Geertz, 1973) of the issues related to strategic thinking and the creative process: ‘the richest histories will emerge from multiple methods, with intertextual analysis, participant accounts, and observation of activity working together to produce a fuller portrait of the process’ (Prior, 2004, p. 197). The research methods deployed during the ethnographic journey of immersion are now presented in detail.

3.4.1 Stage One: Industry Immersion

The objective was to ensure the researcher was immersed in the world of event management during the study. This process was an on-going and documented observation and interaction with a panel of industry stakeholders. The observation and interaction included casual coffee meetings and encounters, participation in industry events and networking, workshops and casual observations of the creative process in event management where possible. This was documented in a reflective journal entitled ‘Industry Journal’ (see Appendix B). This stage kept the researcher grounded in the reality of the world under scrutiny. Further these panel
discussions allowed a deeper level of immersion over time with a range of practitioners (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007).

The triangulation of data from this immersion enabled the findings to be more widely applied than a ‘pure’ longitudinal study of one organisation. Finally there was an on-going relationship between the researcher and practitioners throughout the study. This built trust over time and enabled greater meaning to be assigned to the dialogue with event managers in terms of terminology used, views held and feelings shared.

3.4.2 Stage Two: Exploratory Semi-Structured Depth Interviews

The interview remains the most common method of gathering data in qualitative research. There is a range of interview types but they all have certain common characteristics (King N., 2004). The qualitative research interview can be defined as: ‘an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena’ (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). In order to establish the broader context for the study as well as gain more detailed insights than the casual encounters of the ongoing immersion, two exploratory interviews were conducted (see Appendix D for a transcript excerpt). Specifically the concepts of strategic thinking and the creative process were discussed. The objective of the interview was to view the topic
of research from the perspective of those being interviewed. As such the
interviews had a low degree of structure, consisted mainly of open-ended
questions (see discussion guide in Appendix A) and focused on ‘specific
situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee’ (Kvale,
1983, p. 176). The interviewees were chosen for their relevance to the
research question and diversity of events as well as the ease of access for
the researcher (see chapter 4 for interviewee details).

3.4.3 Stage Three: Longitudinal Case Study

Given the interpretive nature of the research question and issues, a case
study approach was taken. Investigation within a real-life context supported
the development and empirical understanding of the research area (Yin,
2003). The case study was used to examine the research question and
issues based on direct experience with the area of research (Glaser &
Strauss, 1967). This reflected the ethnographic approach explained in
section 3.3. The case can be defined as a phenomenon of some sort
occurring in a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Case study
research ‘consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over
a period of time, of one or more organisations, or groups within
organisations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and
processes involved in the phenomenon under study’ (Hartley, 2004, p. 323).
The strategic selection of cases can support more generalizable claims pertaining to the resultant data (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case study was used here to contribute to knowledge of particular phenomenon at an individual, group, social or organisational level. It is a common research approach in the business environment (Ghauri & Grenhaug, 2002). This approach allowed the characterisation of meaningful, real-life events such as management processes, individual lifecycles and group behaviours (Yin, 2003). Case studies can be used to accomplish a broad range of research objectives (Eisenhardt K. M., 1989). For example they can be used to describe a particular phenomenon, such as the creative process in event management (Kidder, 1982). To test previously developed theory (Pinfield, 1986; Anderson, 1983) such as the conceptual relationship between the creative process and strategic thinking in event management. Or to generate theory (Eisenhardt K. M., 1989; Gersick, 1988; Harris & Sutton, 1986) such as how strategic thinking could be applied as an alternative paradigm for the creative process in event management. The construction of theory from case studies relates well to this study.

Other research using the case study approach documented by Eisenhardt (1989) demonstrates that research that is interpretive in nature can utilise case studies to examine a particular research problem. Examples cited include strategic decision-making (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois-III, 1988), group
development in project teams (Gersick, 1988), strategic change (Pettigrew, 1988) and strategy formulation (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). These examples were all applicable to the nature of this research. It was necessary for a deep investigation within a specifically identified setting. This enabled thick descriptions of the phenomena under exploration. The choice of a single longitudinal case study enabled an exploration of the research question within such an organisational setting.

The chosen organisation was the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival (MFWF). The festival setting is outlined in detail in chapter 4. The research took place over an extended time period of nine months with the researcher observing the creative process for the next annual festival. These observations were documented in a reflective journal (see Appendix C). The social group under observation was the permanent team working in various roles to support the delivery of the festival. The background to the festival is briefly summarised as follows and is detailed in chapter 4.

3.4.3.1 The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival

The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival activities attract 300,000 people through a program in Melbourne and regionally in the State of Victoria in Australia. The festival is a not for profit organisation and engages stakeholders from the local and regional community. The festival team
consists of practitioners in event management, creative direction, marketing, public relations, governance and general management roles. The year-round team of 13 full-time staff expands to over 300 contractors and volunteers during the festival period in March each year.

In order to ensure validity and integrity of data, a range of methods were used to interpret the research issues within the longitudinal case study organisation. The study itself took place over a timeframe of nine months. The researcher was physically present for some of this time to observe the festival team working through the creative process for their event program, then absent as the creative process moved on to event delivery, then present once more to explore ‘how it went’. In order to triangulate the data in the most effective way, there was a time of immersion incorporating interviews, observation and study of documentation, followed by a gap, followed by a number of interviews post festival. Each of these methods is now explained.

3.4.3.2 Participant Observation

People make sense of the world around them through the course of daily life. In the context of this research event managers will make sense of the processes they use in the course of carrying out these processes in their world of work (Jorgensen, 1989; Waddington, 2004). Understanding more
about specific processes in event management is central to this thesis. Participant observation is a method used to focus on the meanings of specific phenomena as viewed from an insider perspective (Di Domenico & Phillips, 2009). It is a process of understanding and exploring the world of an everyday life and the meanings ascribed to certain activities within this world. In this study, the world of event management and the activities of strategic thinking and the creative process (Jorgensen, 1989; Waddington, 2004).

The participant observer in the form of the researcher was situated in the here and now of the everyday life of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. The social location of the researcher was therefore important to the process and must be considered in this context (Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher can be viewed as socially located on a continuum from complete insider to complete outsider. For the purposes of this study, the participant observer played the role of outsider with the opportunity to overview scenes and make note of distinctive features, relationships, patterns and events (Jorgensen, 1989). The participant observation for this research was specifically situated during the festival creative process. This enabled focus on the issues raised for research whilst minimising intervention into the working lives of the research participants and festival organisation. The creative process took place over a three-month period during June, July and
August. There were two meetings per week exploring and validating the creative process. Prior to attendance at these meetings, ethics clearance was obtained and two preliminary meetings were held to meet the research participants in an informal setting. This built an impression of the research environment and created a feel for the setting without becoming obtrusive during the physical participation itself (Jorgensen, 1989). Notes were gathered in handwritten form in a journal and transcribed for later data analysis (see excerpt in Appendix C). The journal method is now explained.

3.4.3.3 Researcher Reflective Journal

The observations and interactions of the event world over the research period were documented in the form of a reflective journal. This method was used in order to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the subject (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Hertz, 1997; Pink, 2004). The journal ensured that research issues were explored in a humanistic and critical way. There is some criticism of reflexion in the literature, suggesting a too heavy influence on the part of the researcher (Goldthorpe, 2000). However, for the purposes of this thesis the reflective journal was one of several research tools used to explore the research issues. As such the journal data were triangulated alongside the data from the other sources such as depth interviews to gain a more impartial and thick description of themes.
3.4.3.4 Study of Documentation

Multiple sources of information were sought in order to gain a secondary view of the longitudinal setting alongside observations and interviews. This created a formal account of the case study to provide supporting documented evidence of the creative process and strategic thinking within the organisation (Yin, 2003). Documents such as the minutes of attended creative meetings, annual reports, websites, audience and other stakeholder collateral, strategic plans and mission statements were gathered. Ethical consideration to document confidentiality was also given.

3.4.3.5 Semi-Structured Depth Interviews: Pre Event

In line with the most common method in qualitative research, interviews were also used during the longitudinal study. The interviews supplemented the participant observation, as not all staff members were present at all creative process meetings. Furthermore the interviews enabled a more detailed picture of the research issues as individuals expressed meaning that was not realisable in the group setting. This enabled triangulation of the data against the notes from participant observation. 11 of the 13 full-time staff members were interviewed. Two were unavailable. For consistency the same discussion guide featuring the same research issues was used for the longitudinal study as was used for the exploratory industry depth interviews (see 3.4.2). Interviews were recorded with the participants’ consent and in
line with ethics regulations. These recordings were then transcribed for subsequent analysis (see excerpt in Appendix E).

3.4.3.6 Semi-Structured Depth Interviews: Post Event

Further to the interviews during the observation of the creative process, another series of interviews after the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival were conducted. These interviews took place several months after the previous research and provided a further level of insight into the research issues. Post event discussion enabled a richer, deeper understanding of the processes post event. Research participants expressed mental models of successes and failures of event management activities in the context of strategic thinking and the creative process (Ellis & Davidi, 2005). Furthermore this activity added another dimension of triangulation to minimise the limitations of ethnographic research identified earlier in this chapter. Due to personnel changes between the first and second stage of interviews seven staff were interviewed after the event versus 11 before the event. At this stage the researcher and the case study organisation agreed that staff would be more likely to open up further to the researcher if the interviews were not recorded. This proved effective in terms of staff being able to discuss openly the differences between the original creative process and how this related to event delivery. The approach generated further data due to the openness of staff at this stage of the research. Participants
consented to be interviewed in line with ethics regulations. Handwritten notes were made by the researcher and later transcribed for analysis (see excerpt in Appendix F).

The range of methods used provided a rich and valid set of results derived from the research issues outlined at the beginning of this chapter. However, a high volume of data arose from the range of sources. This data required collation and analysis of themes to interpret the issues and answer the research question. The data analysis process is now explained.

3.4.4 Data Analysis

The ethnographic journey in this study was based on immersion and observation. The objective was to construct categories of social phenomena based on this observation. Further there was a need to identify relationships between categories of social phenomena, i.e. the challenges facing event management alongside the concepts of strategic thinking and the creative process. The presentation of data gathered over an extended timeframe from a range of sources and with a focus on depth and meaning brought with it challenges. Patterns emerged from the data in relation to the core research question exploring strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. Outlining the themes that emerged from the lived in world of event management in terms of challenges, strategic thinking and
the creative process was the primary concern of the data analysis. The patterns emergent in the data provided insight and explanation of this world. Further to this insight however, the detail of *what was said* and *how it was lived* was reflected in the results to support the credibility of the data.

This research is an in-depth interpretation of strategic thinking and the creative process as important and under-researched phenomena in event management. Detailed quotations and data excerpts were provided to support of the patterns described, together with sources. This process of reporting the results was based round the ‘wood and the trees’ principle exemplified by (Perry G. , 2005). The ‘wood’ being the world under scrutiny and the ‘trees’ being the areas of detail present in each data set. In other words, patterns were drawn from the data without losing touch with the richness of the range of sources used along the journey.

There was a range of themes emerging from the literature. It was important to identify these themes both *from* the literature and *through* the data. A first pass of the data enabled a cross reference of themes identified *from* the research issues. It was critical at this stage to ensure each theme had been sufficiently questioned and scrutinised to ensure rigour in analysis. There were several passes of the data, across a range of properties, people and behaviours, in order to arrive at the finalised themes detailed in chapter 6.
These subsequent passes through the data enabled themes to be evaluated in terms of their frequency, relevance and inter-relatedness through the various data sources acquired on the journey.

In ethnographic research pre-existing category schema of social and cultural characteristics are often used to frame and present research findings (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). The objective was to frame emergent themes around the research issues (RI 1-3) identified from the literature and throughout this thesis. Due to the detail and depth of the data gathered, a research matrix approach was used. This was the simplest and most effective way to present the data across the emergent themes from the research issues and through the range of sources. This matrix and discovered themes is outlined in the chapter 5 in the presentation of the research findings.

3.4.4.1 Issues and Limitations in Data Analysis

Although this study was longitudinal in nature there were limitations in the duration of the research. The major case study runs on an annual timeline. As such the study focused on the creative process before and after a specific festival delivery period. This limited the extended periods recommended for some longitudinal studies. In this context the study was case study based although a strong element of ongoing participant
observation incorporating ethnographic principles. There was a significant volume of data emerging out of the range of sources. Transcriptions of depth interviews, researcher journal, documentation and notes from the participant observations all contributed to the volume of data. The use of a software package such as *nvivo* was considered to support the analysis. However, the range of themes that emerged from the research issues led to the choice of a manual coding approach. Although time consuming, this further enabled the researcher to become closer to the data as analysis took place and themes were drawn out.

There were also ethical and confidentiality considerations that restricted the gathering of certain data and the publishing of certain results. Extensive time was invested in gaining the trust of those under research (Brewer, 2000). Due to the length of the study and the temporary nature of event management (see chapter 2) there were personnel and other structural changes during the research period. These issues were considered and accounted for during the ethnographic journey. The researcher was pragmatic and realistic about the nature of this form of qualitative research. The research method described in this chapter considered the unpredictable nature of human research was more than offset by the benefits of comprehensive, descriptive results.
3.5 **Conclusion**

This ethnographic journey provided an insight into the world of event management in Melbourne Australia. The triangulation of a number of data sources enabled a rich insight to be gained into the opinions, processes and culture of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management. The longitudinal case study proved to be the most extensive aspect of the research. The observation of the creative process in situ provided first hand experience of the influences and characteristics of the process. The broader context of the industry supported the perspective of challenges faced across a number of organisations. The subsequent analysis of results was challenging, but a detailed picture of event management practitioners and their approach and attitude to the creative process and strategic thinking was created. The world in which this study was situated is now described in more detail in *chapter 4*. This will describe in detail the participants and organisations under study as well as the structure of event management explored on this ethnographic journey relevant to the research question.
4 The Event Research Setting

‘Melbourne has enjoyed considerable success in its efforts to build an event profile and now has substantial recognition as the events capital of Australia’ — (King & Jago, 2003, p. 8)

This study is an ethnographically informed, case-study based journey through a specifically identified research setting in event management. This setting is the Australian city of Melbourne. There is a preponderance of event management research based on quantitative studies. Many are derived from areas such as tourism impact or event evaluation. There have been recent calls in the literature for more qualitative research into the social and emotional world of event organizers and participants (Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010). This research, situated in a social setting, answers that call. The ethnographic approach used in this thesis is in line with other longitudinal studies (Sørensen, 2003) and responds to generate a more balanced view of non-quantitative research methods in event management. Furthermore a substantive contribution to events and festivals research is made through addressing the research issues identified in chapter 2 and in Table P below to answer the research question: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’
**Table P. Research Issues and Parent Literatures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Issue</th>
<th>Parent Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI1</td>
<td>Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI2</td>
<td>Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little or no research into the characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI3</td>
<td>Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further to the research method outlined in chapter 3, this chapter describes the world within which the study is situated. This event research setting comprises event managers and organizations in Melbourne, Australia. Contextual information is provided alongside an understanding and justification of how placing the research in this setting is relevant and appropriate to answering the research question in this thesis. The flow of this chapter is explained in Figure XIX.
In *section 4.1* the setting of the ethnographic journey detailed in *chapter 3* and rationale behind the choice are introduced. *Section 4.2* establishes the research process used and the timings involved. *Section 4.3* introduces the *broad contextual setting* of people and organizations in event management. *Section 4.4* presents the *specific longitudinal setting* of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival as the main case study for the research. *Section 4.5* closes the chapter with a summary.

### 4.1 Introduction to the Ethnographic Journey and Setting

The longitudinal and ethnographic journey of immersion was chosen due to the dearth of qualitative research in event management as previously highlighted as well as its relevance to the line of enquiry. Immersion allowed the researcher to become accepted within the research setting in order to study participants in naturally occurring environments and with minimal interference (Brewer, 2000). This enabled observational and interviewing opportunities to ensure rich and comprehensive descriptions of the social setting could emerge (see also *chapter 3*: research method).
The city of Melbourne was chosen not only for its geographical proximity to the researcher but also for its relevance to the study area. Melbourne as a city possesses attributes relating to the parent literatures of event management, the creative process and strategic thinking identified from the literature for the purposes of this study. Melbourne is perceived as an events city as well as a creative and cultural hub in the state of Victoria and also in Australia (King & Jago, 2003).

There exists a creative milieu of cultural and infrastructural preconditions to orchestrate the flow of ideas and creative activities, including event management (Landry, 2000). From the perspective of creative process there are three attributes considered important in a creative city (Florida, 2004). The first attribute is what is there? The combination of a built and natural environment creates a setting for creative life to exist and flourish (Landry, 2000). Melbourne has a well-developed infrastructure, parklands and a bay side location as well as a solid and growing population base. Melbourne is regularly cited as one of the world’s most liveable cities, ranked number one in the Economist Intelligence Unit Liveability Ranking, 2011 (The Economist, 2011). Melbourne is the capital city of the Australian State of Victoria with a population of more than four million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The second attribute is who is there? Melbourne demonstrates a diversity of people and cultures as Australia’s
second largest city. Thirty-one percent of the current population was born overseas and 27.9% speak a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Melbourne is home to a number of international universities attracting domestic and overseas students from a broad range of backgrounds. The final attribute of a creative city is what is going on there? The café, culture, arts, music and street scenes are perceived as vibrant in Melbourne. Outside leisure and sporting pursuits are also highly supported. Melbourne has hosted and continues to host a number of large-scale events, including the 2006 Commonwealth Games, the Australian Formula One Grand Prix and the Australian Open Tennis tournament.

In this context it is argued that Melbourne is an events city. The events industry in Melbourne and the State of Victoria contributes $2.4 billion to the local economy each year (Victorian Events Industry Council, 2010). This is achieved through more than 8,000 events, including festivals, sporting events, business events and exhibitions (Victorian Events Industry Council, 2010). In 2010 for the second year running, Melbourne was awarded the title of Ultimate Sports City in terms of ability to host major sporting events (Church-Sanders, 2010). Facilities, transport, accommodation, government support, weather, tourism, legacy, public sports interest, and quality of life are all factors cited in Melbourne’s continued popularity as a city to host
events (Tourism Victoria, 2010). From the perspective of strategic thought, Melbourne demonstrated best practices for cultural, social and economic development to become the second UNESCO World City of Literature in 2008 (Unesco, 2008). Melbourne also achieved the Most Admired Knowledge City Award based on a knowledge-based taxonomy of human, social and financial capital in 2010 (World Capital Institute, 2010). These acknowledgements suggest a city well positioned for situating an ethnographic study of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management.

4.2 Research Process and Timings

The research question of this thesis is qualitative in nature as elucidated earlier in Chapter 3. As such the research process required a careful selection of cases based around criteria of accessibility and relevance (Eisenhardt, 1989) (Yin, 2003). Construct validity in relation to the research question was also important (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008). The period of the study was 18 months from May 2009 to October 2010. This journey was based on two research activities in two settings. The choice of these two settings was based on the information-oriented model advocated by Flyvbjerg and highlighted earlier in this thesis (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The first activities in a broad contextual setting consisted of informal discussions and in-depth interviews with a panel of event managers during the 18-month
study period. These event managers were drawn from a range of organisational and professional backgrounds. This setting enabled a broad understanding of event management issues in the context of the study.

The second activities were in a specific longitudinal setting. The chosen event organisation was the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival (MFWF). This festival is a major annual event on the Melbourne calendar, taking place in March each year (City of Melbourne, 2011). The study of this organisation took place from May 2009 to September 2009 and included participant observation of activities during the festival’s event creative planning process. Further to the observation, semi-structured depth interviews were conducted with all core staff members before the festival during June 2009 and after the festival during April 2010. Semi-structured interviews are common in ethnography as a way of accessing participant experiences (O’Riley, 2005). Those under study can express themselves in their own way and in their own time (Brewer, 2000). Furthermore, combining the interviews with participant observation acted as a way of triangulating the data as well as providing a more in depth understanding of both the observed and discussed practices of creativity and strategic thinking in event management in a social setting (Spindler, 1982; Gilbert, 2001; Fetterman, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Seale, 1999; Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).
The objective over the extended timeframe of the study was for the researcher to become immersed in the practitioner world of event management in Melbourne, Australia and within the case study organisation in particular. The researcher observed, discussed and noted the creative and strategic practices of event managers and the three issues developed from the main research question were explored in order to answer that question. The two settings used for the research activity are now explained in detail.

4.3 **Broad Contextual Research Setting**

In order to understand the broader context of events, practitioners and activities in event management were consulted and observed. Each practitioner was alphabetically ‘coded’ for the purposes of later data analysis (see below Tables). The first consultation consisted of two semi-structured depth-interviews, the results of which were transcribed and added to the data for analysis. Table Q provides details the two organizations consulted and the challenges and structure of each. The organizations were chosen for their diversity of challenges and creative structure when compared with one another and also with the longitudinal study detailed in the next section.
Table Q. **Contextual Semi-Structured Depth Interviews (Industry Immersions: Data Sources 1 and 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference in Research Matrix</th>
<th>Case Organisation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Event Types</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Creative Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immersion A</td>
<td>Jack Morton Worldwide</td>
<td>Corporate, marketing communications</td>
<td>Product launches, conferences, exhibitions, live experiences, ceremonies</td>
<td>Client management, global financial crisis, adding value through strategy/originality</td>
<td>One creative director as key stakeholder and team approach to concept development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion B</td>
<td>Lort Smith Animal Hospital</td>
<td>Charity, community services</td>
<td>Gala dinners, fundraisers, community events, donor programs, keynote speeches</td>
<td>Lack of funds and resources, new to events as a communications device, emotional engagement</td>
<td>Multi-skilled team of staff and volunteers with informal approach to creative concept development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further to the interviews, informal conversations with a panel of event practitioners took place from which a reflective journal was kept (see also research method in chapter 3). The results of the journal were also added to the data pool for analysis. There were seven members of the panel and the unstructured and informal discussions took place in July 2009, March 2010 and July 2010 (see Appendix B for an excerpt of the Industry Journal). Table R details the event practitioners who attended the panel during the study period.

Table R. Event Practitioner Panel Participants (Formed basis of Industry Journal – Data Source 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Nature of Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panel A</td>
<td>Head of Events, PR and Corporate Affairs</td>
<td>Not for Profit Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel B</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Events/PR Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel C</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Sports Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel D</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Events Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel E</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Corporate Events Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel F</td>
<td>Contract Event Manager</td>
<td>State Government Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel G</td>
<td>Event Manager</td>
<td>Sustainable Event Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally and further to the interviews and panel, nine industry related events and one academic conference were attended with notes from observations added to the journal and later analysed. These events included four hosted by the International Special Events Society (ISES). ISES has been used as
a reliable research source by published authors in event management including Goldblatt (2000; 2005; 2007; Special events: a new generation and the next frontier, 2010). One event (AIME) was attended annually during the study period to consider industry changes over the three years of research and writing. Table S lists the events attended with timeframes.

Table S.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSVP Event Industry Expo</td>
<td>24 June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 May 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific Incentive and Meetings Expo (AIME)</td>
<td>19 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 February 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 March 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Centre for Event Management Research Summit</td>
<td>6 &amp; 7 July 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISES Networking Event</td>
<td>19 February 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISES Networking Breakfast</td>
<td>27 October 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISES Gala Dinner</td>
<td>12 August 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISES Student Conference</td>
<td>12 May 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This first research activity enabled a broad insight into event management practices in Melbourne and the academic context through attendance at the conference. Researcher immersion in the practitioner world was focused on the research issues identified from the literature in order to answer the
research question. This kept the researcher at the coalface of event management practices during the study.

4.4 **Specific Longitudinal Research Setting**

Further to the immersion in Melbourne events, a specific event organisation was chosen to focus the study for the second research activity. This became the main subject of the research in the form of a longitudinal case study and forms the majority of the data gathered. The case study is now introduced, and its relevance to the study justified and explained in detail.

The choice of a single longitudinal case study enabled an exploration of the research question within an organisational setting. The chosen organisation was The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival (MFWF). The major component of the research took place over an extended time period. Five months (May to September 2009) were spent observing the organisation as it prepared for the annual Festival in March 2010. These observations were documented in a journal. Further to the journal, in-depth interviews took place with each staff member. Eleven interviews were held with festival staff during June 2009 (Longitudinal A to M and Data Sources 4 to 21). Subsequent in-depth interviews with seven festival staff (two had left the organization) took place post-festival in April 2010 (Post Event A to G and Data Sources 22 to 28).
MFWF features 11 relevant factors as a suitable longitudinal case study to explore the question and issues raised in this research. Similar factors have been identified in research literature to frame strategies around case study selection (Flyvbjerg, 2006) although these factors are unique to this case study. Table T introduces and justifies these factors, which are both internal and external to the organisation. Some factors relate to the creation of the event, i.e. the way in which the organisation is structured to design, manage and deliver the festival. The other factors relate to the consumption of the event, i.e. the way in which the audience interacts and experiences the festival. The factors are introduced and as follows and explained through the details subsequently provided as well as in Tables U, V and W:

**Table T. Rationale for Longitudinal Case Study Selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Justification</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Developed over time since its inception in 1993</td>
<td>Table U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Range of events varying in size, scale, costs, duration and resources required</td>
<td>Tables U &amp; V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Management process must consider a broad spectrum of events from green-field/conceptual to regular/established</td>
<td>Table V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Situated locally in Melbourne and regionally in the State of Victoria for a broader study context</td>
<td>Table V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Recognised as one of Melbourne’s major events in terms of audience numbers and economic impact</td>
<td>Table U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Range of attendees from different demographic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds</td>
<td>Tables U &amp; V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>Visitation from overseas and other parts of Australia.</td>
<td>Tables U &amp; V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach/ Influence</td>
<td>International culinary celebrities are a festival feature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Structure</td>
<td>Permanent core team, long-serving CEO and new Creative Director structure at time of study</td>
<td>Table W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Full access to the festival team over an extended time period for research on festival creative and strategic practices.</td>
<td>Section 4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Range</td>
<td>Stakeholders from several backgrounds representing a holistic view of the influencers of the strategic and creative process.</td>
<td>Figure XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Wine Tourism Impact</td>
<td>General increase in popularity of food and wine tourism in the area contributing to the validity of the festival and its use as a case study</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key factors to set the context of the case study are now presented based on the factors described in Table T. The references in the table refer to further sections in this contextual section of the chapter to further support the rationale behind choosing MFWF as a longitudinal case study.

4.4.1 **Background to the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival (MFWF)**

The following section provides detail on MFWF, its size and scale and the impact it has on food and wine tourism in the State of Victoria. During 2009, approximately 1.1 million visitors to the State of Victoria participated in food and wine activities (Tourism Victoria, 2010). These visitors accounted for an estimated 30 million nights spent in Victoria during the period (Tourism...
Victoria, 2010). Victoria accounted for an estimated 23.3% of International Food and Wine tourism visitors to Australia in the year 2009 (Tourism Victoria, 2010). One aspect of this food and wine activity is the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival (MFWF). MFWF is regarded as a premier international food event in Australia (Gourmet Traveller, 2009) and has an impact on how food and wine is perceived in Melbourne and the Australian State of Victoria: ‘The Festival has a vital place as the flagship for promoting Victoria’s burgeoning food and wine industry and culture. It provides the ‘launching pad’ for greater interstate and international marketing.’ (Tourism Victoria, 2004, p. 3). MFWF is held annually in Melbourne and in regional locations throughout Victoria. Producers of food and wine from Victoria and the world’s most renowned chefs are prominent in the city for the duration of the festival. The festival took place over a 12-day period during March 2010 and will enter its 20th year in 2012. The events held over the festival period attract visitors from local, regional and international destinations. The Festival has evolved from a month-long program of five Melbourne events in 1993 to over 250 events across Victoria with almost 400,000 visitors recorded in 2010. Further key data are detailed in Table U and subsequently explained (adapted from MFWF wrap data, 2009 & 2010).
## Table U. Festival Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>1993 vs. 2010</th>
<th>2009 vs. 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendees</strong>:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>300,000+</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>33% +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Events:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Events:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>11,200+#</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>43% +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Frame</strong></td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>17 days</td>
<td>12 days</td>
<td>-9 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Events</strong>:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>5000%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Guests</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$21 million#</td>
<td>$28 million</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publicity Value</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$21 million#</td>
<td>$28 million</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Impact for State of Victoria</strong></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$35-$40 million**</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Figures being qualified in all future reports as the total attendance often reflects a large variance due to different mini Festival and Events being included i.e. Gippsland Festival or Harvest Picnic when falling in the Festival period.

**Preliminary Figures

# Estimate based on 2010/2009 Difference Figures
Table U summarises the key data for MFWF from the year of its inception in 1993 and compares this data to the festival in the year before and during the study. Because the study has evolved since 1993, the 2009 data were also included to provide a more realistic year on year comparison. The table helps to present the scale, scope and economic impact of MFWF. The festival has grown from five events in 1993 to 250 in 2009 and 2010. There was a significant (33%) increase in attendance at the festival in the year of the research. Regional events were well attended in 2010 compared to the previous year, coupled with an increase in the number of events. Overall publicity generated for the event through media partners such as local Melbourne broadsheet newspaper *The Age* and *Channel Seven* television also increased year on year. The Figures demonstrate a positive growth for the festival against these performance indicators since 1993 and year on year. The data suggest MFWF was a festival expanding and developing, enjoying continued popularity and contributing economically.

**4.4.2 The Events Program at MFWF**

There are a variety of events taking place within the festival enabling investigation into the creative and strategic process for a range of event types. Table V provides examples of the main events and is explained as follows. Each event was placed under a general theme, in line with how the festival categorises its event forms. The events are either city-based,
regional or gastronomy focused. Each event is named in the table and some are explained in more detail to provide a clearer idea of the event types. Events are further categorized in the table as single activities core to the festival (Flagship), of significant scale in terms of attendance (Large), as a range of events under one theme (Umbrella), initiated as an idea from a past festival (Re-launch), or entirely unique and fresh to the 2010 festival (New). Finally a brief description and the size and scale of the event are provided in the table where appropriate (adapted from MFWF data, 2010).

250 events took place during the 2010 festival. This figure included 12 offered free to the public and 69 events in regional Victoria. The remainder of the events took place within the greater Melbourne metropolitan area, with the majority occurring within the city.
Table V.  
Festival Events Structure (Adapted from Melbourne Food and Wine Festival Wrap Data 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No/Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City-based</td>
<td>Gala Dinner</td>
<td>Flagship</td>
<td>Celebrating Fine Dining</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World’s Longest Lunch</td>
<td>Flagship</td>
<td>One long continuous table</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foodie Films</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Food &amp; Outdoor Film</td>
<td>Multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edible Garden</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Public Edible Garden</td>
<td>Multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heat Beads Hawkers Market</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Street food from 12 of Melbourne’s popular Asian chefs</td>
<td>3 nights 6000+ attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metro Event Program</td>
<td>Umbrella</td>
<td>Events celebrating multicultural diversity</td>
<td>140 events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Cellar Door</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Local Producers</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marysville World’s Longest Lunch</td>
<td>Relaunch after bush fires</td>
<td>One long continuous table</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homeless World’s Longest Lunch</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>One long continuous table</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Longest Lunches</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>One long continuous table</td>
<td>19 events simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Event Program</td>
<td>Umbrella</td>
<td>Events celebrating regional diversity</td>
<td>50+ events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>No/Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastronomy</td>
<td>Langham MasterClass</td>
<td>Flagship</td>
<td>World renowned chefs</td>
<td>Multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hands-On MasterClass</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theatre of Ideas</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Latest Food &amp; Wine Trends</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Wine Experience</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Rare Wines informed by Experts</td>
<td>1 event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.3 Overview of Events (Adapted from MFWF Data 2010)

Further to the general explanation, more detail on the events described in Table V is now introduced. This detail supports the choice of this longitudinal setting as relevant to the study of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management.

The flagship events occur alongside smaller events taking place in the city. ‘Foodie Films’ combines dining with watching films at an outdoor cinema in the heart of the city. The ‘Edible Garden’ encourages people to consider the sources of the produce they use for cooking. The ‘Gala Dinner’ celebrates fine dining. The World’s Longest Lunch takes place in a city location with 1000 people dining together on one long, continuous table. Cellar Door represents the local producers in regional Victoria at a Melbourne based location. The other regionally focused events include 50 local events and 20 longest lunches. The gastronomy events are aimed at those with a passion for food and wine. The focus is on knowledge and experience. Some of these events are flagship events, such as the ‘Langham Master-Class’ where world-renowned chefs share their ideas at the prestige Langham hotel in Melbourne. Other events include the more experiential, ‘Hands-On Master-Class’ for audience members to engage with the food and wine first hand. ‘Theatre of Ideas’ focuses on the latest food and wine trends, again, with world-renowned experts. Finally, the ‘Global Wine Experience’ allow
guests to discover rare wines from around the world, informed by experts in the field. This range of events within the festival is designed to appeal to a broad audience with a passion and interest for food and wine, in line with the vision and mission of the festival. This overview summarises the external factors relating to the festival in terms of the audience and their consumption of the festival. The internal factors relating to the festival organization and the creation of the festival are now introduced.

### 4.4.4 Longitudinal Research Participants

Given the organizational nature of the research issues emergent from the literature and in order to answer the research question, an understanding of the festival organizational structure was necessary. The organizational structure of MFWF is now introduced, along with the staff involved in creating and delivering the festival. This staff formed a substantial source of the results for the research. In line with the research method outlined in chapter 3, the research was focused on exploring the lived in world of an event management community.

Full access was granted in terms of both observation and interview. This formed one reason for this case study choice alongside the rationale detailed earlier in Table T. As a longitudinal study there some were staff changes during the research, which are reflected in the number of
interviews conducted. Table W summarises the organisational structure of the festival (adapted from MFWF data, 2010). The names have been removed for reasons of confidentiality. The staff member role is detailed alongside the nature of their employment and skill set where appropriate. Finally, the function they play in the delivery of the festival is provided. In particular the role each staff member plays in the strategic and creative process helps to set the context of the results presented here and in the subsequent chapter. The organization outlined in Table W is now explained.

In 2010, the MFWF maintained a core of 11 full time permanent staff focused on the festival all year round. The overall event team expanded to over five hundred people during the festival period, consisting of contracted staff, volunteers and local students. To complement the permanent team were four contracted, part-time creative directors responsible for the ongoing generation of new ideas and opportunities for the event program. These creative directors were from a culinary, rather than event background and were hired predominantly for their expertise and networks in the food and wine community. The use of four creative directors was a new initiative in 2009/2010 at the time of the research. Previous to the appointment of a creative team, MFWF used one creative director, again from a food, not event background. During the research period, two of the creative directors left the process, leading to a proposed review of the creative team at MFWF.
during 2011. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) led the permanent festival team. This team performed the marketing, public relations, administration and event management functions for the festival. The Board of Directors guided and directed the festival and its development alongside the CEO. The board was predominantly from corporate business, hospitality and media, rather than events backgrounds. Governance with the board and accountability to key stakeholders were the core functions of the CEO. The main team was divided into two further areas, each with varying degrees of responsibility and influence on the strategic and creative process, as noted in Table W. First the Marketing and Public Relations team which focused on communications and sponsorship. Second the Events and Programming team, which worked with the Creative Directors to develop the format and delivery of the festival events. The CEO supported the Events and Programming team area with a Marketing Director responsible for the Marketing, Public Relations and Sponsorship team.
Table W. MFWF Organisational Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYMENT DETAILS</th>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>ROLE IN PLANNING &amp; DELIVERY PROCESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Title</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 x Directors</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Assistant</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Director</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship Manager</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR Manager</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Co-ordinator</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR Coordinator</td>
<td>PTC</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x Creative Directors</td>
<td>PTC</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Manager</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Background &amp; Skills</th>
<th>Strategic/Creative</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Coordinator</td>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>SUPPORTING</td>
<td>Festival management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x Site Coordinators</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Ad-hoc</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Festival Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 x Event Staff</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Ad-hoc</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Festival Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 x Volunteer Staff</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Ad-hoc</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Festival Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245+ TAFE Students</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Ad-hoc</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Festival Delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.5 Key Stakeholders at MFWF

There were a number of stakeholders who impacted the festival. These stakeholders are reported here to provide an understanding of the range of stakeholders involved in the strategic and creative process of the festival. The results of their influence on the research issue are reported later in the results in chapter (developed from festival data 2010 and research journal) subsequent to identification of main festival stakeholders and partners and is subsequently explained.

Figure XX. Stakeholder Illustration

Source: Festival Data 2010 and Research Journal
Figure XX details the range of influences concentrically as they emanate from the central event team. First the funding stakeholders are introduced, consisting mainly of local and state government partners. These have a primary influence and as such are closest to the centre. The second (white) circle highlights the stakeholders who influence the resourcing model, in particular those from the private sector who play a role in sponsoring the festival. Other resources include the participation of international celebrity chefs who are a major draw-card for festival visitation. Finally those involved in the consumption and reporting of the festival are presented. The food and wine interested public form the major stakeholder in this context. Local newspaper and media partners form the other.

This section has provided a summary of events in Melbourne and the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. The rationale behind the choice of MFWF and supporting data has been introduced. This mainly secondary data set the context of Melbourne and MFWF as an appropriate environment in which to situate a study of event management. Furthermore this background supports an understanding of the population under research and therefore the context of the study.
4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a supplement to the research method outlined in chapter 3 in the form of a detailed explanation of the research setting. This specifically identified setting of the city of Melbourne and its relevance to this study has been explained and justified. Furthermore, the significance of Melbourne as an event, creative and knowledge city has reinforced the rationale for the choice.

In addition to the broader context, a specific longitudinal study has been detailed and justified as relevant to the study. The opportunity for the researcher to live in the social world of an event organisation as they worked through the creative phase of an event program was relevant to both the research question and the chosen method of research. Further, this qualitative, ethnographic approach contributes to the lack of studies of this nature in event management, answering calls from the literature.

One by-product of the longitudinal setting choice was the appointment of four creative directors as an approach to the strategic and creative process. This gave the researcher a unique opportunity to specifically explore these processes in the context of the research issues and overall question. The results obtained from such an immersion, alongside triangulation realised by the broader contextual work enabled thick and rich descriptions of the
researched world to emerge. The next two chapters focus on the primary data results obtained from this world. The first of these results chapters discusses the range and scope of views heard in the research. The second results chapter presents the research in the context of emergent themes relative to the research issues and question.
5 Results Part One: Voices and Views from the Field

‘The task [of ethnographers] is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to ‘get inside’ the way each group of people sees the world.’ — (Hammersley, 1992, p. 11)

The above quotation reflects the research journey of this thesis as presented in this first of two results chapters. The research question is explored in these results through the meanings those under study assigned to their world. These meanings have been expressed through their direct and observed voices and views. In order to obtain a thick description of the world under study it is essential these voices and views are heard.

The theoretical framework presented at the end of chapter 2 suggested a relationship between the parent literatures of event management, the creative process and strategic thinking. Exploring the convergence of these three literatures is addressed through the research question: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’ The research consisted of an ethnographic journey, explained in detail in chapter 3. The core objective of this ethnographic journey was to provide deep and meaningful insights from practitioners in event management. Particular consideration was given to insights on the creative process and
strategic thinking. This was achieved through analysing data collected from detailed observations and interviews across a number of sources. The triangulation of this data from a range of settings and points in time and space is an important component in the presentation of the results. Comparing and contrasting results across all data sources enabled the minority and majority views to be heard and examined. This enabled a rich exploration of the issues hypothesised in the research question.

At this stage the data were unstructured. The data collected were not coded at the point of collection. Within the context of event management the phenomena of strategic thinking and the creative process are explored. The results in this chapter are presented based on these parent literatures. The meanings and functions of these activities are analysed and interpreted. This analysis was conducted on the verbal descriptions, observations, voices and views of the actors in the setting of Melbourne event management. The setting for the research is described in chapter 4. The views of a range of event managers in the field are presented as a means of illustrating the diversity of opinion. Through this process a clear picture of event management practice and its relationship to the creative process and strategic thinking is drawn. The flow of this chapter is outlined in Figure XXI and explained as follows:
Following an introduction in section 5.1 voices and views are introduced as they arise from the data. The convergence of these views provides evidence from the field to answer the overall research question. Further this evidence sets the context for the specific themes discussed in chapter 6. Section 5.2 presents views on the parent theory of event management from the data. Section 5.3 discusses views relating to the parent theory of the creative process. Section 5.4 presents views on the parent theory of strategic thinking. Section 5.5 concludes the chapter by discussing the convergence of these views in the context of the research question.

5.1 Introduction

The research setting in chapter 4 described the social world of the event manager explored in this thesis. This world was represented by a diverse group of individuals and organisations. The group ranged from experienced event managers in senior corporate executive roles, owner operators of small businesses through to junior, inexperienced and newly joined members of event staff. Furthermore a range of data methods was used.
Twenty-eight sources in total were drawn upon to inform the results. These sources ranged from informal discussions noted in an industry journal to participant observation and depth interviews. The results were not unanimous and every respondent had a view. It is important that these opinions are represented in this thesis to ensure a thorough extrapolation of later themes. The shades of grey within the data are considered in this chapter. Only through this process could the structured themes expressed in chapter 6 be developed in detail.

There was richness in the research results from a wide range of event managers. The resultant narrative from these respondents needs consideration in the context of the research question and issues. Representative quotes directly from respondents and researcher journals are used throughout the next two chapters to ensure a direct view from the field. These voices are representative of the meanings the participants assigned to their thoughts and actions. In order to explore the research question as fully as possible all voices must be heard and represented. Painting a picture of the practitioner world and the actors within it was essential to this process. The answer to the research question can only be fully derived through detailed consideration of these voices and views.
The parent literatures outlined in chapter 2 informed the shaping of the semi-structured depth interview discussion guide used in research as well as the focus of issues observed and discussed (See Appendix A - Depth Interview Discussion Guide). As such the theories of event management, the creative process and strategic thinking became the main focus of the views expressed by respondents. Views that existed within the theoretical framework but equally those that sat outside that framework are presented.

Full details of the respondents can be found in chapters 3 and 4. The aforementioned 28 data sources for this research are summarized in this section. There are tables in this chapter to explain the data. Appendix G features an in-depth representation of the entire data set (see Appendix G - Research Matrices). The sources consisted of an informal industry panel that was consulted throughout the study and documented in a journal, itemized by month. In addition to the panel there were two contextualising semi-structured depth interviews with industry practitioners. Finally there was a longitudinal study in a festival organisation consisting of an extended period of participant observation on the part of the researcher. This observation was specifically during the creative process as the organizers prepared for the next festival. These observations were also documented in a journal and itemized by month. Finally semi-structured depth interviews were conducted with each of the 11 full-time staff members and creative
directors prior to the festival. Once the festival had finished, seven further interviews took place with those still remaining in the organization. The researcher considered a number of initial opinions as the data were analysed. These opinions were considered in the context of the view of respondents and the parent literatures. Each view and supporting quotes from the data are now presented in detail as a precursor to the themes outlined in chapter 6.

5.2 Views on Event Management

The core results of this data suggest two overriding themes relating to the parent theory of event management. The first theme considers the importance of events. The second theme is concerned with the lack of identity in event management.

The data revealed that all respondents without exception were passionate about the positive impact of events. It was universally agreed that events bring a city alive. According to industry panel discussions, the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006 injected a vibrancy and energy into the city as art and culture were harnessed in a celebration of multicultural Melbourne:

‘The impression I got was that Melbourne had really sprung to life during this time and it reminded me of a chat I had with a member of
the National Australia Bank events team a few months earlier. She had said that many hundreds of people both at the bank and in the community had been involved in the games as volunteers. This had created a fantastic vibe around the city.’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

Further to this view from respondents, researcher observations suggested that events are specifically important in Melbourne, where the study was situated:

‘One of the presentations at the City of Melbourne talked about a ‘supportive public’ and you definitely get that impression in this city. People here love events! I didn’t realize how important they are to people.’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

However, only a very few respondents (seven out of the 28 sources: three from the broader industry context and four from the longitudinal study) were able to articulate in detail what they considered to be the value of events. This is reflected in a more general lack of understanding noted in the industry journal:

‘The energy around events in Melbourne has reminded me of their value and impact. The challenge seems to be there is a lack of understanding around the back-story of any event. There is energy and excitement about the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the event.’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal
The importance and value of events may have been biased by the respondents’ immersion in the field. However, the universal nature of the response is worthy of note at this stage in the results. Irrespective of respondents’ seniority or experience, events were considered at all levels to be a valuable commodity in Melbourne culture.

During the depth interviews for both the broader industry context and within the longitudinal case study, there were divergent views expressed when compared with the majority of the data. There was a minority view that events suffer from an identity problem. It was suggested that calling it the events industry does not accurately describe the range of activities involved in event management. There is a perception of events as ‘venues and menus’ but the industry does not really do anything to address this issue. The majority (all except three respondents) found it difficult to express exactly what event management or events meant. A typical answer was:

‘Gosh, there are so many different events it’s really hard to say what one particular event is.’— Depth Interview: Longitudinal I

Many respondents could clearly express their own role in terms of the day-to-day, but could not define the general notion of event management simply and succinctly:
‘So what’s my perception of the sector? I’m a bit confused as to what it means to be part of the events sector, to be honest.’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal D

The minority suggested that the industry was still struggling to define and justify itself. In some cases they were unaware of basic measures such as audience numbers:

‘The industry still needs an effective way of managing and measuring itself and in some cases they don’t even know how many people are attending their events’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

The nature of the industry contributed to the identity issue. What is expected of event management and the people operating in the sector? How do perceptions fuel the issues further? If event management lacks definition, what are the implications for its perceived value and subsequent investment potential?

‘because the event industry is chronically under-resourced I think there is a general attitude of not investing in it properly. You know we bring staff in at the last possible moment and get rid of them as quickly as we can. It is just commonly accepted that it is fine that we have turnover and that we don’t carry knowledge’. — Depth Interview: Longitudinal F

Further contribution to this issue arose from the broader industry data. Informal conversations with panel members led to a discussion on the
question of why an event? This question seems to be rarely asked. Those consulted from the corporate event environment were driven by client briefings where the decision to hold an event has already been made. The arts, festivals and not for profit event organisations were motivated by fundraising or donations:

‘As communications professionals there is a need to bring insight into the room for the client. This insight consists of much more than booking a venue or proposing a menu. More serious consideration ought to be given to some of the ‘bigger’ questions: why was the client doing this event? Why had they written a brief? Surely they had decided to solve a problem using live events? What had led them to this conclusion and why?’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

The sentiment in both the broader data and that specific to the longitudinal study was that events were the poor relation to other activities of higher perceived value. This identity gap was self-fulfilling as event managers struggled to articulate the true value of events.

5.3 Views on the Creative Process

Having established the importance of events yet the identity issues surrounding event management, the data were analysed to consider the creative process. Again, two main views emerged. The first highlighted the collaborative nature of the creative process according to event practitioners.
The second revealed that the creative process is operational and focused on solving problems.

In terms of the creative process as collaborative, this view applied across 28 data sources. In the initial phases of the observed process in the longitudinal study the creativity was freewheeling. There was an element of ‘anything goes’. However, the objectives of the festival were clear as the group collaborated to generate ideas and this seemed to set a frame for the thinking:

‘Solutions were being discussed with these creative objectives in mind:

1. Acceptance of ideas
2. Clarification/discussion
3. Shortlist
4. Action.’ — Longitudinal Case Study: Research Journal

One contributing factor to the observed creative process was the value of outside experience. This enabled a divergent range of ideas informed by experience to be tabled:

‘The combination of event specific/organization specific experience and wider diverse experience facilitates discourse/problem solving/issues
and conceptualization of ideas.’ — Longitudinal Case Study: Research Journal

There was a range of styles of creative expression from the team members. These observations were drawn from the observations and interviews in the longitudinal case study. A total of 25 data sources were consulted. The nature of the creative process was influenced by the role, experience and personality of each team member. The four creative directors were all equals in terms of role but had very diverse styles of creative expression. For example, one creative director used visual expression:

‘Image circulated at the meeting to demonstrate an industry trend. The image featured a white background and then a variety of fresh brightly coloured fruit and vegetables, positioned as an ‘emblematic icon.’ — Longitudinal Case Study: Research Journal

Another director, used words as creative expression and a stream of ideas drawn from previously derived research:

‘passionate download of ideas, lists and lists of creative concepts backed up with evidence. He talks from some notes on a Mac in front of him but generally is descriptive in his creative thoughts. He paints a picture and looks at a ‘spot’ on the table as he visualizes his creative and explains it to the group’ — Longitudinal Case Study: Research Journal
There was credibility attached to knowledge and experience in this context. However, there was not full buy in. The operational team was more sceptical about the realities of executing proposed ideas. This was further impacted by the agendas of each team member as driven by stakeholders and other operational issues:

‘there is a ‘swingometer’ between creative scoping and conceptualization and problem solving – i.e. from the strategic to the tactical or from the macro to the micro’ — Longitudinal Case Study: Research Journal

The consensus in the early stages of the creative process was that a collaborative and inclusive process, driven by credible and passionate experts was a successful formula for the creative process. However, as time progressed, concerns appeared. Collaboration and agreement took time. This put pressure on the operational team as their delivery timelines were impacted. The range of work styles, time allocated and the aforementioned diverse styles of creative expression became complex to manage:

‘with the four creative directors there is the view that the festival is only a small part of their time so becomes the poor relation compared to one dedicated creative director. There is not so much ownership or accountability.’ — Longitudinal Case Study: Research Journal
This issue was reflected later in the research when team members were consulted post festival. Of the seven staff members interviewed at that time, none expressed a positive experience with the creative format used:

‘In my view the appointment of the creative directors was botched. There was no clear brief or objectives. The responsibilities of the events guys was not made clear in terms of engagement with the creative directors in terms of both the process and the outcomes.’ — Longitudinal Depth Interview: Post Event M

Only the most senior staff remained positive about the experience and they proposed that the process would be managed differently next time.

Further to the collaborative nature of creativity in event management, there were diverse views amongst staff in the longitudinal study with regard to the characteristics of the creative process. The dominant view was that creativity was seen as way of solving problems. The creative process was designed to address operational issues.

For the majority creativity was about vision and the skill of being able to connect and articulate what this vision meant for people:

‘For me creativity is the stimulation of meeting…there are so many incredibly passionate and motivated people who have got seeds of ideas that can be explored’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal E
For others creativity was seen as freewheeling and almost a physical experience as energy surged through the body:

‘I just love letting go. I think creativity is coupled with that, just having no inhibitions and just going, yes, anything is possible’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal C

Only two were driven by the idea that strategic thinking could set the context for the creative process. This was a view that stood out from the majority of the data:

‘You are not going to develop the creative side of an event if you are not thinking strategically because strategic thinking is about assessing where you’ve just come from and where you want to go’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal F

When the longitudinal study data were cross-referenced with the broader immersion data patterns emerged. There was a majority voice that expressed event management in operational terms. This voice also tended to describe the creative process as a method for solving operational problems:

‘The workload does stamp out a bit of the creativity’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal A
Nearly half of all data sources (11 out of 28) pointed to an operational bias in event management:

‘Most of the time in events the creative process is one of problem solving rather than conceptualisation’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

This was exacerbated by the short-term nature of the sector fuelling the issue. Skills were not entrenched. Thirteen of the 28 data sources suggested this was an issue:

‘It is commonly accepted that it is fine that we have turnover and that we don’t carry knowledge. Therefore there is no development.’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal F

The skill sets in event management lay in solving problems. Those consulted on the industry panel described how they were attracted to the industry for that reason:

‘Most of the people I talk to are skilled in the operational side of events. If anything they have been drawn to the industry through a love of such organizational and operational issues. They like to solve problems: how do we make this work? How do we get that on a stage? How can we create an extravaganza’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

This operational, problem-solving focus was observed both on the part of leadership and more operational staff:
‘It’s still about how can we make the signage look better’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal B

There were two examples of senior staff demonstrating a more operational approach than their more junior counterparts. There was a tendency to revert to the operational necessities of the event even at an early stage in the planning and creative phases:

‘The event industry seems to be very operationally focused. I am observing teams where the first stage of any creative process is to jump to the operational aspects of the event. More often than not this has been things like booking a venue or considering a menu for the lunch’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

The broad background and experience of the respondents in the research led to a range of descriptions of the purpose of event management. They ranged from expression of an idea through to the generation of monetary value or a more positive and lasting legacy effect. From a creative perspective the focus was on the idea:

‘In some ways they don’t even seem that bothered if a large audience doesn’t turn up! It’s all about an idea which needs to be brought to life in some way and shared with a group of like minded people who will really appreciate it.’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal
For most of the participants in the research across all sources, the creative process was about fine-tuning the framework of an existing event rather than considering the overall approach:

‘The creative changes and progress between events are WITHIN the events and not the events themselves per se. In other words the format of an established event framework will change rather than the overall approach to the event. This smacks of an operational focus – the tail wagging the dog so to speak.’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

This applied to all but three of the data sources. The minority three considered strategic thinking as a driver of the event creative process (see section 5.4). One was represented outside of the case study organisation in the initial exploratory work. Two were within the case study organisation. This minority view offers an alternative perspective:

‘Now that I think about it, the difference between a tactically led agency and a creatively led agency is the strategy, because the strategy gives you your creative direction.’ — Depth Interview: Industry Immersion A

There was a minority voice that suggested event management was suffering as a result of this operational bias:

‘I haven’t seen it being driven from the top down, saying: ‘come on guys, we need to think strategically, we want to build ourselves into
being a world player, we need to up our game, we need to do more industry consultation’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal D

The operational nature of event management boxed in the way in which the industry conducted itself with clients, funding bodies and other stakeholders:

‘People still think: how long does it take to come up with an idea for an event, really?’ — Depth Interview: Industry Immersion A

Of the 20 depth interviews that took place over the study period, only five considered the operational nature of the creative process in event management as an issue to be addressed:

‘We kind of land running and just find out the bare minimum of what we have to do and then just do it’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal F

This fringe view provided a context for the later extrapolation of the data as well as the discussion in the conclusion on how the data related to the extant literature.

5.4 Views on Strategic Thinking

There were varying degrees of understanding in the results of the term strategic thinking. This led to a number of views on its potential application to event management. The majority held the view that strategic thinking did not apply as event management is operationally led. The fringe view
considered strategic thinking as the framework from which the creative process could emerge. This was contrary to the predominance of operationally led creative practices in event management emerging from the later results in chapter 6:

‘If you know the context in which you are working, i.e. you’re given a very good brief, it is so much easier to come up with better ideas. Because everyone can come up with ideas, splat, spat, splat, splat, cover the wall with them.’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal K

The terms creative process and strategic thinking were often used interchangeably. This led to confusion as to what was meant by these terms. One exception was able to distinguish between these terms. This supported an understanding of the value of strategic thinking:

‘I think there is often a confusion that strategy and creativity are seen as one and the same thing and they’re just not. Strategy is being able to think about things in a bigger picture kind of way, creative is how you can take that and make something out of it.’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal D

These fringe comments ran contrary to the majority of the results but are worthy of mention in the context of the overall research question. The minority voice was frustrated at both the perceptions of people outside the industry and the failure to act within:
‘we f*****g deserve to be here. We have just as much smarts and just as much thinking and just as great creators as the above the line agencies. You guys just have to get on board with us. That’s it.’ — Depth Interview: Industry Immersion A

While a significant representation in the data struggled to define the identity of event management one standout voice refused to be identified as an event firm. This was driven by the idea of being more strategically aligned:

‘we would never call ourselves an event company, and in fact we’d be drawn and quartered if we did. So we relate to ourselves, and moreover more importantly, our clients relate to us as a strategic partner that operates in a large space’ — Depth Interview: Industry Immersion A

The other industry depth interview originated in a not for profit environment. Resources were a major issue but this led to a view of the challenges faced in event management and possible responses to those challenges. There was a busy event calendar in the events city of Melbourne. There was a fight for attention. With limited resources and a challenging event environment the hard, strategic questions had to be asked. Why were we doing an event? What was the purpose? This more strategically led line of enquiry became the frame for the creative process. How can the mundane become interesting and stand out from the crowd? How can a compelling story be told?
‘How do we get people to really connect with what we are trying to do, and really make them emotive about what we are doing, so that they do see the urgency and do see how important it is without it getting a bit dreary and a bit boring.’ — Depth Interview: Industry Immersion B

This notion of considering a strategically led line of enquiry or aligning with clients as a strategic partner represented the minority view of participants in the study. Only two of those consulted as part of the industry immersion expressed this view and only three from the longitudinal study. For most there was confusion as to what was meant by strategic thinking. Paradoxically there were still strong opinions that strategy was important. It simply did not apply to event management:

‘people recognize the value of strategy but feel they have a living to make and quite often their clients do not see their role as strategic at all. In other words — plan and execute the party and don’t stick your nose into the way I communicate my brand’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

The perceived value was not there. The issue remained complex with divided opinions on the subjects of the relationship between the creative process and strategic thinking:

‘event companies are better placed to occupy strategic roles but the industry and their clients need time to catch up and shift their pre-
conceived ideas of event managers as party planners’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

The voices and views from the field presented in this chapter provide deep evidence to support the answer to the research question of this thesis. Further they provide a setting for the detailed themes explored in the next results chapter. In the context of this research question the views presented can be converged into three perspectives. These perspectives are based on the parent literatures of event management, the creative process and strategic thinking explored in this thesis. The first perspective is from those who neither understand the terms nor see them as valuable in their practice world of event management. The second perspective is from those who see the connection but do not perceive it as valuable. The third perspective relates to those who see a valuable connection between each of these three parent literatures. Each perspective has been summarised for this thesis, derived from the commentary in the data. These summary perspectives and a supporting quote for each from the data are outlined below:

**Perspective One:** I do not understand the concept of strategic thinking or its application to the creative process. The creative process in event management is operationally led.
‘Time-line wise, maybe cost-wise, we have to do it this way’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal A

**Perspective Two:** I understand the concept of strategic thinking. However, it is not relevant to the creative process in event management. Event management is and should be operationally led.

‘They see no point in rocking an already stressful and busy boat by adding in the notion of strategy. It works the way we do it now. Why change it?’ — Informal Panel: Industry Journal

**Perspective Three:** I understand the concept of strategic thinking. It is not currently broadly applied to the creative process in event management but it should be.

‘It’s good if it keeps you holding in place that there’s a broader thing than the tablecloth or managing the risk from rain’ — Depth Interview: Longitudinal D

In exploring these practitioner perspectives, the relationship between event management, the creative process and strategic thinking is revealed as complex. Many of those consulted were unclear on what was meant by strategic thinking. There was not a straightforward and linear connection between strategy, creativity and event management. Equally not all considered an operational paradigm as dominant. While the mainstream of those consulted in this study were working within an operational context,
others claimed to understand strategic thinking but did not see a place for it in the creative process for event management.

However, there were minority voices that maintained the value of connecting these phenomena: “The strategic comes far, far before the creative” (Industry Immersion A). Participants considered the importance of strategic thinking: “strategy is the great truer-upper” (Industry Immersion A), but the overriding sentiment was one of the dominance of operational acting.

These reflections on the initial exploratory work in the data provide clarification of the bigger issues as they relate to the overall research question. Once this intimate familiarisation with the data had been achieved, themes could be validated through the literature. This enabled a clearer vision of the specific themes emerging from the broader parent literatures and views discussed in this chapter. These themes and the corresponding results in the data are now presented in detail in chapter 6.
6 Results Part Two: Themes from the Data

‘You don’t like blue, I don’t particularly care for it either, but in this context, and with this strategy backing it, blue makes sense, doesn’t it? — Depth Interview: Industry Immersion A

This chapter presents the results thematically of the research undertaken in this thesis. The research method is described in chapter 3. The research setting and participants are described in chapter 4. These sources comprise people and organisations in event management in Melbourne, Australia. The diverse voices of event managers under research are detailed in chapter 5 as a precursor to the themed results now outlined. Figure XXII highlights the flow of this chapter and illustrates how the results are presented.

Figure XXII. Chapter 6 Structure

In section 6.1 the research question and three research issues addressed in this thesis are reiterated. Section 6.2 introduces the results and how they are presented in the thesis. Sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 present the results under themes drawn from each of the three research issues. Section 6.3
deals with research issue one (RI1) on event management challenges. 
Section 6.4 deals with research issue two (RI2) on the creative process. 
Section 6.5 deals with research issue three (RI3) on strategic thinking. The chapter closes with a conclusion in section 6.6.

6.1 Research Question and Research Issues

The research explores the issues identified in order to answer the research question: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’ This thesis argues that despite emerging challenges, event management retains an operational focus in creatively addressing those challenges. It further argues that strategic thinking is an alternative method for creatively addressing emergent challenges in event management. As far as the author is aware, this question has not been explored empirically in previous event management research. The research addresses this gap by exploring three issues identified from parent literatures in chapter 2, as illustrated in Table X.

Table X. Research Issues and Parent Literatures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Issue</th>
<th>Parent Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI1</td>
<td>Event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI2</td>
<td>The creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event management is a creative industry and creativity is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter presents the results arising from research exploring these three issues in the field in order to answer the research question. These results and supporting data are presented in detail.

6.2 Introduction to Results

The journey towards developing research themes from analysing the data and the extant literature has been discussed. This next section presents in detail the results of the research journey undertaken to answer the research question of this thesis.

First, quantitative survey results are presented to establish the demographic details of those under research. Second, themes are identified from each of the three research issues. The themes have been drawn from the full range of data sources gathered during the ethnographic journey described in chapters three and four. These sources and the corresponding themes are
presented in detail as a matrix in and are summarised as research discussion topics in Table Y.

Table Y. Overview of Research Issues and Research Discussion Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Issue</th>
<th>Research Discussion Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI1</td>
<td>Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI2</td>
<td>Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little or no research into the characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI3</td>
<td>Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research discussion topics arising from research issues are introduced at the beginning of each section of this chapter and then presented in detail in that section. Theme identification is based on the most recurrent and interconnected themes across the range of data sources as well as relevance to the overall research issues. Anomalous themes are also presented to provide a rounded consideration of the issues. All data gathered, including research journals, informal discussion notes and in-depth interview transcriptions have been used in the collation of these
results. Quotes and excerpts from the data are used to support this throughout. The information presented is synthesised into a summary at the end of each section and the end of this chapter.

6.2.1 Demographic Overview of Researched People and Organisations

In order to establish a framework of the population involved in the research journey some simple demographic questions were asked. The full results can be found in Appendix H and are briefly summarized as follows.

- A larger proportion of the respondents were female and in the 35-44 age range.
- More than two thirds had a tertiary level of education, although almost half had no specific formal qualification in event management.
- Eighty percent of those surveyed had over five years experience in event management, with three quarters running five or more events per year.
- The general demographical data suggested a female gender bias, longer-term event experience and high levels of education.

Further to this data, respondents were asked in the same survey to rank their perception of the core values of event management. This information was gathered as general support to the research issues (see also Appendix G).
The values presented were derived from the Event Body of Knowledge (EMBOK), (Rutherford-Silvers, 2008) cited in chapter 2 as the basis for event management processes in the literature. Strategic thinking was ranked as the most important value in an event management. Integrating events with other activities was the least important. Strategic thinking was the core value amongst the sample.

Further to the demographic context, results from exploring each of the three research issues are now presented in turn.

6.3 Results for Research Issue One (RI1)

(RI1) Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.

The first of the issues explored was that of challenges in event management. The results focused on the nature of the challenges faced. Table Z summarises the themes that arose as challenges for event management when they were categorized from all data sources (see also Research Matrices in Appendix G).

First each theme (A to D) was identified and the number of mentions within each data source established to give a weighting to each issue. There were a total of 28 data sources for this issue. The theme of procedural challenges
(Theme A) was mentioned most frequently. Competitive challenges (Theme D) were the least frequent. In-depth interviews prior (Data Sources 9-21) and post the event (Data Sources 22-28) within the longitudinal case study proved to be the most prolific sources of data with the general industry immersions and researcher journals as support (Data Sources 1-8).

Table Z. Themes emerging for Research Issue One (RI1): Challenges in Event Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Context</th>
<th>Total No of Data Sources</th>
<th>No of References in Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Procedural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Immersions (1-2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Journal (3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Journal (4-8)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Event Interviews (9-21)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Event Interviews (22-28)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.1 Theme A - Procedural Challenges

Procedural challenges faced in event management were raised throughout the broader context and were observed as part of the operational reality of
the planning process within the case study. Financial challenges in particular were cited as influencing the management process: “the big challenge is the cost of outdoor events” (A9), “always pressures on cost of staging events outside” (A13). Alongside the issue of costs, the challenge of generating funds from supporting stakeholders was mentioned. There was a ‘squeeze’ of managing costs on one hand, while exploring the range of revenue sources on the other, the “main challenge is securing funding” (A15). As well as the funding itself, there was an increased requirement for financial reporting. Those who were willing to invest in the event medium sought evidence of how the investment could generate value. This created a third dimension to the financial challenge, alongside cost management and funding: “hard evidence that benefits are going to come in” (A2). Further to the necessity of financial reporting there was a requirement to answer to stakeholders based on operational (and changeable) criteria in the form of broader key performance indicators (KPI’s). It was felt this could influence the event management process: “be aware of the changing KPIs of partners” (A13). General event management administration across a range of issues was also seen as a major procedural challenge. There is increased consideration and reporting of risk: “risk management required, food safety permits” (A13) and potential litigation: “lots of barriers that are growing increasingly.” (A13). However, it was viewed as an important issue, which without focus could impact on the event itself and the reputation of
the organizer: “danger of negligence and lack of duty of care.” (A25). In the context of creativity there was concern about lack of time and resources: “limited resources drive certain behaviours.” (A15) and how this could divert attention from more strategic challenges to manage the procedural aspects of event management: “not particularly strategic, reasonably short-term focused.” (A15)

6.3.1.1 Summary

There was a focus on the procedural aspects of event management. This included financial security, administration and reporting of an event. These operational realities and challenges remained the ‘bread and butter’ of ensuring that events took place. There was little time or resources to focus on anything other than these procedural aspects in the event management process. Taking a broader or more strategic approach to addressing challenges was seen as a luxury.

6.3.2 Theme B – Definition and Perception Challenges

The challenge of definition by those in the industry emerged in conjunction with the challenge of perception by those outside the industry. Due to the broad nature of event management: “Gosh, there are so many different events it's really hard to say what one particular event is.” (B17), it was seen as wide-ranging in scope but still emergent as a profession. Many of
those researched struggled to define what an event or event management meant: “I’m confused as to what it means to be part of the events sector.” (B12). Further to the industry trying to understand itself, there was also the challenge of how event management was perceived by those outside. External stakeholders faced the same definition challenge as event managers: what is event management? Research subjects suggested their clients and stakeholders had a general perception of event management as light-hearted: “a fun, muck-around kind of job.” (B11). When asked to define an event based on their own perception, many respondents were challenged to respond: “what’s my perception of the sector? I don’t know. I’m completely confused.” (B12). The diversity of the sector contributed further to the confusion of how to define event management or events in a particular way: “it’s so massive, so diverse.” (B12). The notion of what it meant to be an event manager remained somewhat intangible. Many respondents could clearly express their own role in terms of the day-to-day, but could not define the general notion of event management simply and succinctly. In terms of perception there were two levels to this challenge. First was the perception of the roles within the industry. Many of the practitioner roles in event management were task oriented and defined as such: ‘producer’ or ‘venue manager’. These roles were specific to aspects of the event management process, rather than the process in its entirety as the term might suggest. Even the broader role of event manager rarely
incorporated an end-to-end process of event management, rather tasks and responsibilities within it, based on operational criteria. Second, was the more general and external perception of the industry: “event managers as party planners.” (B3). There were mixed feelings about this perception. Some accepted this as in line with their own confusion about industry definitions. Others were frustrated that despite the creative work done in the industry, there was still a perception of ‘party-planning’, which in their view had to be changed: “it irritates me that the event industry is seen as menus and venues.” (B1). The event industry was judged by the end product rather than the journey to develop that product. Again, the issue of event management as emergent (or even immature) was raised: “in the little corner is the events team.” (B1). Many found it difficult to reconcile the procedural challenges highlighted in the previous section with the need to 'educate' stakeholders about a potentially more strategic role for event management: “while clients are paying it’s OK for the industry to be seen as the dumb blonde.” (B3). In other words if the client wanted a ‘party’ and was prepared to pay for it, in a climate where costs and funding were a challenge, why would an event supplier challenge that?

6.3.2.1 Summary

There was level of frustration about perception and definition challenges in some quarters, but others accepted that in its current cycle, event
management was still at the operational level. This sentiment was compounded by procedural challenges. The issue of financing an event was seen as a priority over trying to change perceptions of event management. It was broadly recognized that definition and perception issues represented a challenge in terms of the longer-term perceived value of event management.

6.3.3 Theme C - Retention Challenges

The financial and perception challenges highlighted in the results gave rise to further challenges relating to event staff. Many of the respondents referred to staff resourcing issues leading to retention challenges: “the event industry is chronically under-resourced.” (C14). The ‘lumpy’ nature of event management was seen as a reason for a high turnover of staff: “we bring staff in at the last possible moment, and get rid of them as quickly as we can.” (C14). There was a challenge to retain staff that viewed the overall nature of the industry as short-term (see also perception challenges): “I see events workers, generally, being very transient beings.” (C21). Staff turnover was also seen as contributing to the short-term view of event organisations as they struggled to keep experienced staff from one event to the next. One of the key challenges highlighted relating to staff retention was the issue of lost knowledge: “we have turnover and that we don’t carry knowledge.” (C14). It was very difficult to have a longer term, sustainable
view of the management of a particular event or event program when there was attrition of those staff involved: “you are constantly reinventing the wheel.” (C21). Alongside the retention of operational staff, the issue of management knowledge was highlighted. There was a view that senior event staff lacked consistency in their engagement with particular projects, either staying too long and too close to the project: “they’ve been in an event senior role for too long” (C13), or not long enough, thus impacting on the process: “they move on after a short period of time.” (C13). The perception of work within the industry was in line with the perception of the industry itself: that it was about the ‘party’ and not necessarily a long-term career: “it’s very much a contract approach.” (C21). It was seen as a fun potential summer job or something to try in between other, more serious career considerations: “a lot of it is seasonal work.” (C15). This perception could impact on the nature and skill sets of people who migrate to roles in event management. The intensity and uncertainty of event work itself was also cited as a reason for the high turnover of staff: “It’s so intensive around that six-month cycle.” (C15). This exacerbated the challenge of retaining knowledge from one event to the next, further fuelling the perceived temporary nature of events and the event management process: “the exit of knowledge year on year.” (C15). This staff attrition created a “broken trajectory” (C21) in the event management process. Wellbeing of staff was a further consideration. Although risk and litigation relating to event audiences
were given focus in event management (see procedural challenges), there remained a perception that event management was about difficult and challenging working conditions: “there’s not much about sustaining yourself as a person.” (C11). Furthermore, the high-pressure environment of events consisting of periods of intense activity, followed by periods of inactivity, led to staff burning out: “people are so exhausted by the reporting stage.” (C15). This ‘churn and burn’ may have contributed to the loss of knowledge and experience from one event to the next. This departure of knowledge at the end of an event project was once again seen as a challenge: “we have no idea what the history is.” (C14). There was a general consensus that skilled and experienced staff was hard to retain in a project-focused industry: “short contracts represent a challenge.” (C15). The longitudinal case study of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival in particular were able to secure the funding needed to retain staff: “our team expanded quite considerably with increased government funding.” (C21). This was seen as positive in terms of retaining knowledge and expertise when compared to previous years when the funding was not available.

6.3.3.1 Summary

The challenge of staff retention was related to the previous challenge of industry perception. The industry was seen as temporary and ‘fun’ – leading to a perception that roles within the industry would be the same. There was
a project-based approach to recruitment leading to low retention levels and the exit of knowledge post-project. This contributed to the perception of event management as temporary. There was little consistency in recruitment as it was resources driven and this was seen as frustrating. The case study organisation had been able to meet this challenge to a certain degree, increasing permanent staff through funding support. However, this was only a recent development. The nature of event management was seen as ‘lumpy’, with periods of high intensity, followed by inertia. Resourcing this lumpy business was unpredictable and therefore it was difficult to predict permanent staffing levels and the associated costs. Cost management and funding previously identified as challenges contributed to this issue.

6.3.4 Theme D - Competitive Challenges

The final challenge identified in the results was that of competition: “so much competition for events.” (D9). There were finite resources available and limited audiences to be shared amongst the event providers. This represented a challenge identified in the research: “the calendar is quite crowded.” (D2). Furthermore, the planning process required a wider view than purely the operational aspects of event management: “being aware of what the competition is doing.” (D13). Consideration was given to the broader industry view and awareness of the actions of competitors. The impact both locally and regionally was mentioned: “in Asia or New Zealand
or in other states.” (D13). With many competitors chasing the same audiences and resources, there is a danger of saturation point with events being over exposed as a medium: “a tired market of people who just don’t want to go to another event.” (D2)

6.3.4.1 Summary

The research suggested event management competed with itself as well as with other communications forms. The definition challenge highlighted earlier led to event sectors developing their own voice and their own agendas. These agendas led to internal competition between elements of the event industry such as ‘Meetings and Events’ or ‘Special Events’, each represented by a separate body. This fragmentation of event management represented a challenge when considered in the context of finite audiences, resources and staff for all events.

6.3.5 Synthesis of Results for Research Issue: Event Management Challenges

The dominant theme in the results was one of structure. There was a range of interconnected challenges. Many of the challenges highlighted related to the way in which the event management was structured and managed. Structure in this context related to the operational, procedural realities of the event management process but also how the industry viewed and defined
itself. Further, this structure referred to how event management was perceived by those outside the industry. This in turn influenced the attractiveness of event management as a career in terms of skill sets and professional longevity. The issue of how event management was structured to deliver stakeholder requirements emerged as a challenge, in particular the issue of internal competition for finite resources.

The challenges highlighted were interconnected. There were limited resources, becoming increasingly difficult to justify. Justification was further made difficult by the perception of event management as ‘fun’ discretionary or ‘leisure’ spending. There were financial and administrative challenges leading event management to focus on project-by-project survival. This project focus in turn led to staff resourcing issues and loss of knowledge at the end of each event, feeding the project-based nature of event management and the perception of the industry as temporary. There was a range of competitors sharing the limited resources, audiences and available staff.

The connection between results suggested that the challenges in event management were interdependent, rather than independent. Respondents in the research expressed a desire to address the challenges but implied they were struggling to do so within the framework of current practice. The
practice was operational in focus. The second research issue explored the creative process used in responding to these challenges. The next section presents the results of the research on this issue.

6.4 Results for Research Issue Two (RI2)

(RI2) There is little or no research into the characteristics of and the influences on the creative process in event management.

Further to the challenges identified in the previous section, this section is based on understanding the creative process in event management in response to challenges. The operational nature of event management was mentioned as having an influence on event management. This impacted the creative process. In order to explicate the results of this section it has been divided into two subsections. First the characteristics of the creative process are discussed, followed by the influences.

6.4.1 Results for Characteristics of the Creative Process

Table AA summarizes the key themes arising for the characteristics of the creative process in event management (see also Research Matrices in Appendix G). First each theme (E to H) was identified and the number of mentions within each data source established to give a weighting to each issue. There were a total of 28 data sources for this issue. The theme of a project based creative process (Theme F) was mentioned most frequently
and the reactive nature of the creative process in event management (Theme H) was the least frequent. In-depth interviews prior (Data Sources 9-21) and post the event (Data Sources 22-28) within the longitudinal case study proved to be the most prolific sources of data with the general industry immersions and researcher journal as support (Data Sources 1-3).

Table AA. Themes emerging for Research Issue Two (RI2): Characteristics of the Creative Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Context</th>
<th>Total No of Data Sources</th>
<th>No of References in Data Sources</th>
<th>E. Operational Creative Process</th>
<th>F. Project Based Creative Process</th>
<th>G. Inconsistent &amp; Convergent Creative Process</th>
<th>H. Reactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry Immersions (1-2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Journal (3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Journal (4-8)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Event Interviews (9-21)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Event Interviews (22-28)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.2 Theme E – Operational Creative Process

“Execute. It’s all about execution.” (E14). This quote sums up the operational focus through the creative process. There was some level of
frustration amongst staff that this was the tendency. This is further reflected in an informal discussion with a representative of an event industry peak body in Melbourne: ‘The industry is still in the process of even understanding how many people turn up to events, let alone thinking less operationally than that’ (E3). The issue of operational leadership emerged as a research theme. If the leadership was driven by operational motives then the outcomes could potentially in turn become operational. It was suggested that a reliance on operational factors could cause longer-term issues: ‘you do risk becoming irrelevant’ (E13). Challenges faced by event leaders, which influenced measurement and management processes were indicated. Examples were provided of where an operational creative focus could lead to losing sight of the bigger picture of the event: ‘creating a program and not having the radar up as to what else is going on’ (E13). This was compounded by the difficulty of making substantial changes once the creative process was significantly under way: ‘To do it in a one-year turnaround is really hard’ (E13), or the event had been running for a number of years: ‘it’s really hard to quickly change the nature of an event’, (E13). Staff in non-leadership positions intimated that an operational focus on more immediate measurement criteria could steer the creative process away from considering the bigger picture: ‘tactical KPIs draw resource away from the main goal’ (E27). This operational focus was observed both on the part of leadership and also more operational staff. There was a tendency to revert
to the operational necessities of the event even at an early stage in the creativity process: ‘the first stage of any creative process is to jump to the operational aspects of the event’ (E3).

6.4.2.1 Summary

The data suggested that many of the senior managers in the study recognized the limitations and challenges of an operational focus. Managers felt they were either not equipped or able to drive the event management process in any other way. Financial, administrative and other challenges had somewhat forced the hands of event leaders in the study. Non-management staff also mentioned the limitations of an operational focus. Consideration of more holistic event management issues was highlighted as a valuable aspect of the process, although seen as often not realizable.

6.4.3 Theme F – Project Based Creative Process

Further to being considered operational, the creative process in event management was viewed as project based. It was suggested that staff are accomplished project managers but lack broader creative skills or leadership: ‘people in the industry are very much tacticians rather than strategically led’ (F12). There was a consensus across multiple data sources that the process was focused on the immediate requirements, rather than the long-term implications of an event project: ‘there is not
necessarily a five-year plan in place for a lot of events’ (F15). The influence of leadership was again mentioned at the more operational level. Longer term creative planning was not always practiced: ‘I think it’s really just focusing on the next one that’s ahead’ (F15). Staff brought expertise and perspective from other industries related to event management, such as marketing and public relations. This insight further suggested the creative process in event organisations was not only project focused: ‘they are quite reactionary, I think, and quite kind of ‘in the moment’, shall we say’ (F21) but was also contrary to the broader methods used in other communications: ‘from a marketer’s perspective, a strategic plan is totally fundamental and critical to everything that we do.’ (F21). The idea of broader creative thinking and the time and space to be able to engage with it was viewed as a luxury: ‘the chaotic pace makes it difficult to set aside downtime’ (F21). It was low on the list of priorities when the operational aspects of event management were driving so much of the activity: ‘not able to think beyond a six-month horizon’ (F16). The temporary nature of the industry was raised again (see also challenges). It was suggested that the perceived short-term operating culture of event management restricted the creative view of individuals and therefore the creative process to purely project specific issues: ‘not able to facilitate what you need to be grander in terms of scale’ (F16). This suggestion of a limited creative horizon driven by a chaotic pace was a recurrent theme, again with a mixture of acceptance and frustration on the
part of respondents. It was suggested that a project-by-project creative process also impacted on the behaviour of staff, further contributing to the issue: ‘am I going to be around in a year? Do I even think I can sustain this for more than a year?’ (F21) There were a very small number of exceptions in the research where the focus of the event management creative process was suggested to be more long-term and strategically focused. This applied in particular to one corporate event organisation but evidence was circumstantial based on depth interviews rather than longitudinal observations. It was broadly accepted that the stakeholder and staff perception predominantly remained that the creative process in event management was project based.

6.4.3.1 Summary

The main volume of data sources pointed towards a project led creative process in event management, focused on tactics and event delivery. Staffing and the perception of event management as temporary further contributed to this issue. The creative process was seen as ‘busy doing’ time with little luxury of space to stand back and think. Most accepted this as the nature of the industry, some found it frustrating and were hoping this would change as the industry professionalised and matured. There were notably few exceptions in the research, with one organization in particular citing a more strategic approach to its creative process.
6.4.4 Theme G – Inconsistent and Convergent Creative Process

The creative process was often inconsistent due to a focus ‘in’ the business rather than ‘on’ the business. Creativity was characterised by the day-to-day management and execution of events, rather than consideration of the longer-term creative view: ‘These events companies are small companies with limited time and resources.’ (G17). This environment led to a creative process characterised by chaos and inconsistency as organisations struggled with limited time and resources: ‘They are very traditional thinkers, a little bit all over the place.’ (G10). The organisations under research consisted of small teams, fluctuating in size, depending on the event management resource requirement at the time. This led to inconsistency in the creative process as staff shifted according to available resources. Furthermore staff had a bias towards the convergent thinking required to deliver projects in these conditions: ‘hired to be detail-level implementation specialists’ (G16). The research suggests inconsistency of creative purpose born of a small business culture combined with staff turnover: ‘they don’t know a lot about the organisation and don’t have much history with it.’ (G16)

6.4.4.1 Summary

Creative behaviour was convergent, focused on immediate project requirements. There was little consideration of the broader issues or historical or cultural organisational context in the creative process. The
‘busy’ nature of event management organisations led to an inconsistent approach to the creative process. The challenge of funding and retaining long-term staff under conditions of unpredictable and limited resources drove this inconsistent creative process.

6.4.5 Theme H – Reactive Creative Process

The data suggested that many respondents were creatively responding to change rather than being able to control or manage this change: ‘it’s always kind of working backwards.’ (H11). The change issues were categorized into two main areas. First, there were the changes made to a specific event on the part of stakeholders such as audience targets or required sponsors: ‘There is a short term, sales focused view’ (H25). Second was the more holistic issue of change (societal, environmental, financial) and its impact on event management. The main issue was the creative process led to being reactive to these changes, with little consideration of how to address issues more holistically: ‘things are a bit ad hoc, well, they’re a lot ad hoc, it’s the nature of what it is.’ (H11). The burn and churn highlighted earlier was compounded by a lack of control regarding creative issues: ‘it leads to a very reactive and exhausting approach’ (H25). Many participants felt that wider issues could impact the creative outcomes under their jurisdiction: ‘loose themes are driving the creativity of event design, rather than a coherent strategy’ (H25). This short-term view was raised as contributing to
a reactive creative culture. The limited horizon of thinking led to reactionary behaviour, rather than a considered view of how to creatively influence the future: ‘The problem with the events industry is that it is all about the now.’ (H14). A slightly more light-hearted view also emerged from the research and although it was anomalous to the overall results it was an interesting alternative perspective. It was proposed that one of the wonders of the creative process in event management was precisely that you won’t know how it will turn out and may have to behave reactively to achieve the result: ‘Planning a Festival is like boning a chicken: halfway through it’s f**k it, this isn’t working and it looks like a disaster but you have to keep going and eventually it’ll look wonderful and you’ll be ready for dinner.’ (H3). It should be noted however that the same respondent also noted that a framework for the creative process is important.

6.4.5.1 Summary

Those under research often found themselves reacting to change rather than being able to envision a future through the creative process. The temporary nature of the industry was again cited as an issue, forcing creative focus on the here and now. It was felt there was often a lack of control of broader issues impacting the creative process. One respondent felt this unpredictability was to be celebrated but most found it frustrating.
Further to the characteristics of the creative process in event management are the influences on this creative process. The next section presents the results of the research on this issue.

6.4.6 Results for Influences on the Creative Process

These results present the influences on the creative process in event management in order to answer the research question. Some influences had a positive impact and others a more negative impact. Table BB summarizes the themes that arose as influences on the creative process in event management. These themes were categorized from all data sources (see also Research Matrices in Appendix G). First each theme (I to K) was identified and the number of mentions within each data source established to give a weighting to each issue. There were a total of 28 data sources for this question. The theme of individual experience, personality and trust as an influence on the creative process (Theme I) was mentioned most frequently and the organisation structure, culture and leadership (Theme K) along with task: time the least frequent. In-depth interviews prior to (Data Sources 9-21) and post the event (Data Sources 22-28) within the longitudinal case study proved to be the most prolific sources of data with the general industry immersions and researcher journal (Data Sources 1-8) providing support.
Table BB. Themes emerging for Research Issue Two (RI2): Influences on the Creative Process

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<tr>
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<td>Research Journal (4-8)</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Event Interviews (9-21)</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Event Interviews (22-28)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.7 Theme I – The Influence of Time on the Creative Process

There was never enough time: ‘I keep bringing it up, but we’re always so pressed for time’ (I20). The chaos and busyness of project and deadline-oriented event management left many people feeling they had no luxury of time to think more creatively. ‘It’s a challenging thing to fit that into an already over-stretched set of responsibilities.’ (I21). There was enough time only to work quickly through creative ideas and move on to the operational
realities of executing those ideas ‘I think we haven’t been able to push for creative output because we’ve been chasing our tails’ (I16). Little time was left to validate creative ideas or to consider more broadly the implications of actions taken: ‘there has been very little space for reflection on the creative direction’. (I27). The procedural challenges already highlighted contributed further to the diversion of the time resource away from creativity and towards operations: ‘whatever is not delivered in time doesn’t happen.’ (I16). There was an overall feeling of if only we had more time: ‘to do this really well, we have to do this, and we can’t do this’ (I9). Observationally however there was also a tendency for people to devote time to the areas they were comfortable with, driven by management: ‘it’s just, ‘I have to get this done’. (I20). Greater time value was assigned to comfortable, familiar convergent thinking than messy, unpredictable divergent thinking: ‘too many timelines and too many measurable indicators’ (I13). This was impacted by a lack of understanding around how the creative process related to strategic thinking: ‘there’s often a confusion that strategy and creativity are seen as one and the same, and they’re just not.’ (I12). Conversely, many felt that if space was provided for broader thinking, a more creative thought process would emerge: ‘I think you could probably get great results if you had no limitations’ (I16). The luxury of time would enable a far more rigorous creative process, informed by wider insight: ‘I don’t think you can force creativity in a sit down meeting.’ (I20). There was consensus that time for
research and preparation on the part of individuals would generate richer outcomes during creative meetings: ‘you often come up with good ideas when you’re making a cup of tea’ (I21). Again, observation suggested that this would not necessarily be the case. During the conceptualisation phases of the creative process in the longitudinal case study there was little evidence to suggest that people who were given time space were any more prepared for the creative process: ‘all these incredible creative ideas flying at us a million miles a minute’, (I21). Although people recognised the importance and value of such creative preparation time, very few seemed in a position to exploit this. The core reason seemed once again to be confusion over the relationship between strategic thinking and creativity, its potential value as well as how to approach it: ‘there is no clear articulation of what the strategy actually is.’ (I3)

6.4.7.1 Summary

Time pressure was perceived as a significant constraint on the creative process. Given the results of the previous issues this represents a barrier which is difficult to overcome with the current event management creative process focused on ‘busy doing time’. However, time space was also cited as an enabler of the creative process. There was a general feeling that this was a ‘nice to have’ luxury in the current event management framework. There were also the beginnings of a connection between the creative
process and strategic thinking at this stage in the research, driven by the time imperative.

6.4.8 Theme J – The Influence of Organisational Structure, Culture and Leadership on the Creative Process

Much of the research insight in this section came from the longitudinal case study due to the depth of interaction with the organisation and the individual research participants. Extended observation of the organisational environment and culture supported the sentiments expressed by staff during depth interviews: ‘it’s so driven by the personalities and the culture of the organisation.’ (J12). The staff overall felt connected to the organisation and had confidence in the leadership. In the initial phases of the study there was a level of optimism: ‘we’ve got a space to discuss, to openly throw ideas around.’ (J12). This diminished over time as frustrations with the emerged: ‘it’s not all a bed of roses.’ (J19). Leadership was identified as key in setting the framework around which the creative process could flourish: ‘it needs someone to have the clear direction.’ (J17). In this case the leadership style was very positively received which further implied its value and importance: ‘everyone’s voice is heard but someone is still responsible for carrying an idea through.’ (J15). The leadership facilitated an overall culture of inclusiveness: ‘They can extend themselves a bit more, creatively, because they have got that interaction’ (J9). Most staff felt their voice was heard: ‘a
culture that is very about people being involved and not being afraid to put forward an idea.’ (J10). Although at face value, there was evidence of limited hierarchy there was also a feeling that the more junior staff did not feel heard: ‘people’s ideas have weight according to their position, the hierarchy.’ (J14). They felt their ideas were not as important or relevant when compared to those with more experience: ‘it doesn’t make it a better idea, it just means that it is more likely to fly, which is very dangerous.’ (J14). Only management (and the researcher) attended the creative planning meetings so this could also have contributed to this feeling. Culturally however it was felt the range of personalities across the permanent team made a positive contribution to the creative process: ‘I think we are a little organisation, all hired with different skill sets’ (J16). The range of staff stimulated creativity with expertise from outside the event management context: ‘people have come from different backgrounds: arts backgrounds, marketing, PR backgrounds.’ (J9). Staff turnover levels also had an impact on readiness to think creatively. In the longitudinal study, government funding had enabled the resourcing of a more permanent core team: ‘our permanent staff-base sets us aside.’ (J21). Each staff member interviewed was permanent or contracted, rather than casual. This enabled a consistency of knowledge from one festival to the next: ‘we see ourselves as long-term staff members.’ (J21). However, during the festival build up, two staff and two creative directors subsequently left or tendered their
resignation. This suggested that despite the best intentions of leadership and a more inclusive and longer-term focused culture, the ‘burn and churn’ of event management still had impact and influence on the creative process. The culture generally in many of the discussions was focused around operational issues: ‘the lack of any framework of strategic direction has led to a series of key challenges.’ (J25). Staff were generally empowered and felt as such but the framework in which they were working remained focused on the next ‘project’ rather than the bigger creative picture: ‘our last plan didn’t necessarily reflect a whole lot of creative intent.” (J21). There was a strategic plan in place in the case study organisation but it was under review, leading to a lack of clarity and understanding of the strategic direction at most levels: ‘strategy becomes a ‘catch all’ for everything that isn’t operations.’ (J3). Only a very few of those interviewed were able to articulate clearly what they understood by strategic thinking and it’s relation to the creative process.

6.4.8.1 Summary

The results under this theme were derived predominantly from the case study organisation due to the proximity afforded by the longitudinal and observational research. The overall culture of the organisation was positive in terms of leadership and a sense of belonging and this influenced the creative process. The longer-term staffing afforded the organisation through
funding supported this positive culture. There was a freedom of communications, which positively impacted the creative process although an underlying feeling of hierarchy meant not all voices were heard. Despite the positive culture, an operational focus and a confusion about what was meant by strategy acted as constraints to the creative process.

### 6.4.9 Theme K – The Influence of Individual Experience, Personality and Trust on the Creative Process

Individuals in the organisation influenced the creative process in a range of ways. Personality, position and comfort were all seen as influencers on the process: ‘a combination of personality, collective personality and individual personality.’ (K11). In particular the personal experience and insight of an individual was both cited and observed: ‘there are people who, every idea they have is going to be big and bold, and there are other types that aren’t.’ (K9). The ‘preparedness’ of individuals as they came to the creative table impacted the process with an ‘opportunistic discovery of event ideas through intelligence gathered outside the group.’ (K3). This external ‘intelligence’ combined with previous personal experience of other events would support and energise the group: ‘I have more licence to actually run off in to the bushes and come up with interesting ideas.’ (K14). Further this also encouraged others to ‘raise their game’ creatively and would create ‘sparks’ to move things forward: ‘ideas were drawn from other activities and
personal experiences with a sparring of new solutions, viabilities and objectives’ (K3). There was a mutual respect observed in the case study organisation for this process: ‘we are able to speak our mind and know that it won’t be taken the wrong way. I think we protect that culture.’ (K16). Conversely when there was a lack of preparedness on the part of some team members, this had a negative impact on the creative process and led to frustration and some resentment on the part of those who were ready: ‘there’s lots of things that have come to the forum and fizzled out to nowhere.’ (K16). Leadership as highlighted in the previous section played a role in supporting and facilitating this process to more satisfactory outcomes: ‘an enabler is that culture, open, trusting, respecting.’ (K16). The trust comfort level for individuals operating with their peers and management impacted their readiness to share their creative ideas. This was further dependent on personality and position. In the case study organisation, the events team were less inclined and felt more uncomfortable sharing ‘half baked’ ideas. They found the process confronting and did not enjoy sharing unfinished work or peer scrutiny of this work: I like to present the final sparkly product. I don’t like people to see the crappy bits of the idea.’ (K14). The marketing and PR team in the case study organisation were much happier simply throwing things out there for scrutiny and debate: ‘I think it’s such a key thing to be able to just blurt things at people.’ (K11). Observation suggested this was mostly a
personality issue but was impacted by the team culture. Overall there was a harmonious environment and trust and respect for each other played a role in supporting this: ‘your ideas will be heard and discussed and taken seriously by the broader organisation.’ (K21). However, as time progressed, the lack of a broader plan led to confusion about what was required of the creative process. There were many new ideas emerging each week but without any framework. Consensus decision-making led to last minute changes and this lack of context caused confusion. This led to some stress and chaos.

6.4.9.1 Summary

The cultural environment of the case study organisation provided much of the insight on this theme. There was a marked difference between personalities and teams and this influenced their view on the creative process in event management. On the one hand team members felt it was important to openly share conceptual creative ideas. On the other hand, only fully developed ideas were comfortable being presented. There was a trusting environment so this was about personality as well as organisational culture. Lack of strategic direction and consensus decision-making created some chaos, putting a strain on otherwise harmonious team dynamics.
6.4.10 Synthesis of Results for Research Issue Two: Creative Process

The creative process in event management was operational in nature. There was consensus on this subject. Although some respondents in the study did not consider their own creative process or that of their organisations as operationally focused, all agreed that the creative process in event management was often characterised by its operational bias. There emerged a dialogue on the reasons behind this operational creative process. Overall, there was a focus on project-based creativity to solve problems, rather than a strategic view. The event organisations under research were mainly small or medium sized enterprises (SME). Convergent thinking to address immediate issues was dominant in the event planning process. There was little luxury of time or resources to do anything other than react to extant challenges and changes. These characteristics of the creative process in event management were supported by management practices and measurement criteria.

In terms of influences on the creative process, time pressure was a constraint with time space an enabler (Theme I). The organisation and culture further influenced the creative process. Many of the themes existed within an organisational framework. There were both positive and negative influences on the creative process within each theme. Culture and leadership existed on a continuum of constraint versus enablement of the
creative process (Theme J). Individual experience and trust within teams had both positive and negative influences (Theme K).

The final research issue explored strategic thinking and its possible application to the creative process in event management. The next section presents the results of the research on this issue.

### 6.5 Results for Research Issue Three (RI3)

(RI3) Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus.

The results for this section represent the final research issue discussing strategic thinking. Table CC summarizes the themes that arose as in relation to strategic thinking applied to the creative process in event management. These themes were categorized from all data sources (see also Research Matrices in Appendix G). First each theme (L to N) was identified and the number of mentions within each data source established to give a weighting to each issue. There were a total of 28 data sources for this question. The themes of tension between order and chaos (Theme N) and strategic thinking as context for the creative process (Theme L) were mentioned most frequently and multiple strategic frames for the creative process (Theme M) the least frequent. In-depth interviews prior to (Data Sources 9-21) and post the event (Data Sources 22-28) within the
longitudinal case study proved to be the most prolific sources of data with the general industry immersions and researcher journals (Data Sources 1-8) providing support.

*Table CC.*  **Themes emerging for Research Issue Three (RI3): Strategic Thinking Paradigm can complement current Operational Focus**

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<tr>
<th>Industry Context</th>
<th>Total No of Data Sources</th>
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<th>M. Multiple Frames for the Creative Process</th>
<th>N. The Tension between Order &amp; Chaos</th>
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<td>Research Journal (4-8)</td>
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<td>Pre-Event Interviews (9-21)</td>
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</table>
6.5.1 Theme L – Strategic Thinking as Context for the Creative Process

The theme emerging from the results was how strategic thinking could create a context for the creative process in event management, which an operational focus could not: ‘it’s what David Ogilvy used to call the ‘freedom of a tight brief.’’ (L2). The strategic context took the subjectivity out of the creative process so that event management decisions could be made based on strategic criteria rather than stakeholder or management influence alone: ‘you don’t like blue, I don’t particularly care for it either, but in this context, and with this strategy backing it, blue makes sense, doesn’t it?’ (L1). The setting for the creative process was valuable in providing direction and strategic thinking was seen as essential for this direction: ‘strategy gives creative its platform to work off. Then creative builds on that.’ (L1). Despite this acceptance of a relationship between strategic thinking and the creative process there remained a strong feeling that the process was influenced operationally: ‘creativity in this organisation is really a crazy beast that doesn’t necessarily, you know, have a whole lot of structure around it.’ (L21). The ‘busy doing time’ from the previous results chapter impacted on the ability of staff to embrace broader strategic thought patterns: ‘They are the first things that fall off when you are trying to keep your head above water in the events sense.’ (L21).
6.5.1.1 Summary

There was broad recognition that thinking more strategically could set the context for the creative process. Ensuring a strategically driven argument supported any creative rationale and mitigated the subjectivity of creative outcomes. It must be noted that only very few of those researched were able to articulate the notion of strategic thinking in this way. They were mostly in senior positions.

6.5.2 Theme M – Multiple Strategic Frames for the Creative Process

There were multiple stakeholder requirements, both internal and external, which set the strategic frame for the creative process. The internal expectations of event team(s) from core stakeholders such as the board, senior management, government, sponsors or funding bodies influenced the strategic context and in turn the creative process. In the case study organisation the funding was part government and part private sector so there were many stakeholders. These stakeholders framed strategic requirements in different ways, leading to multiple frames from which creativity was derived. Different staff represented the interests of stakeholders internally, depending on the stakeholder objective and the staff role: ‘The ‘silent’ voice of stakeholders is represented by various team members’ (M3). There was often a reactive approach to the needs of these stakeholders due to the lack of a singular strategic framework: ‘making
everyone happy and achieving everyone’s goals is challenging.’ (M20). Creative and time resource would be diverted to deal with requests from stakeholders to investigate a particular opportunity. ‘Often the hardest thing with the creative stuff is the internal expectations.’ (M12). While this sometimes yielded a creative outcome, often this was not in the context of any one strategic direction and caused frustration: ‘we all have our own ideas in our head about what we want to achieve, and we want to achieve different things.’ (M20). The team would down tools to investigate such requests or opportunities, further fuelling the frustration and perceived lack of direction: ‘where’s the brand? I don’t know who I work for.’ (M25). There was an element of the ‘tail wagging the dog’ through this process as it prevented a clear creative position being developed from a single strategic context: ‘it’s like one-step forward, one step back. Two steps forward, one step back, you know, it’s a bit like that.’ (M18). There was a bricolage of options driven by stakeholders: ‘an issue is quite often related back to government, KPIs and/or sponsors.’ (M27)

Further frames came in the form of external expectations of audiences. Insight and research played a role in impacting strategic thinking and the creative process: ‘The creative process just starts from lots of market research.’ (M12). The case study organisation conducted audience research at each festival and feedback was acted upon: ‘we take on board customer
feedback in a massive way – it really does shape exactly which events we will hold.’ (M9). From a tactical perspective, the audience data were used to refine and develop the regular events, which take place each year: ‘You can get a better perspective, which can generate different things, too.’ (M9). Observation and discussion revealed only limited strategic application of this insight and research. Much of the strategic ‘preparedness’ for creative discussions was framed by intuition and pre-ordained ideas rather than audience data.

6.5.2.1 Summary

The creative process was servant to many masters in event management. The stakeholders played a role in influencing the strategic and creative process. Staff represented stakeholder interests internally. A lack of strategic framework led to a reactive approach to stakeholder needs based on multiple agendas. Research played a role in the creative process of event management. This role was seen as valuable and important in influencing the strategy. However, it was not always feasible to embrace externally driven market intelligence and created a further strategic frame for the creative process. There was no singular strategic context.
6.5.3 Theme N – The Tension between Order and Chaos

There existed a dichotomy in the results surrounding the relationship between strategic thinking and the creative process. Two mindsets emerged. The first was concerned with the idea that it was difficult to ‘tame’ the creative process with a strategic context: ‘I don’t think creative thoughts can come if there’s already restrictions placed upon them.” (N11). This was especially relevant to the more operational, project based skill sets of event managers: ‘it’s hard to go from tactics and logistics to how do you change the world?’ (N16). There remained a tension between the issue of an operational focus leading the creative process rather than a more strategic context: ‘events are often seen as ‘we deliver’, not the strategic.’ (N12). Event managers reflected this in the skills sets identified as important. Strategic thinking was not seen as valuable: ‘from our point of view, we see things as the real picture and not as the big picture.’ (N17). Strategic thinking as a driver of the creative process was also perceived negatively if actions were not derived from this process: ‘I won’t come up with anything big, I’ll come up with something medium or little next time’. (N9). Further to the idea of strategic thinking providing creative context it also created clarity in an otherwise chaotic and reactive event management creative process: ‘it’s forcing you out of your day-to-day thinking, into strategy mode, then into creativity mode.’ (N16). The perceived clarity of strategic thinking was seen as a panacea to this issue of tactics: ‘strategic thinking is a better way to
manage the events process.’  (N15). However, the challenge of understanding remained. What did strategic thinking actually mean? ‘I can’t say that I’ve ever really thought about creative thinking and strategic thinking in the same realm.’  (N11). Confusion over strategic thinking and its relevance and value to event management remained: ‘strategic thinking is a difficult word now, and I’ve kind of lost track of what it is anymore.’  (N12). The words strategic thinking, strategic planning and strategy were all used interchangeably. Moving towards a strategic thinking paradigm under these conditions would come with challenges.

6.5.3.1 Summary

The consensus was that strategic thinking provided the context for the creative process. Anomalous to these results was the view that the creative process ought to be freewheeling and unconstrained by strategic thinking. There was confusion over what was meant by strategic thinking. One of the challenges faced was how to reconcile the day-to-day processes required of event management with the broader issues derived from strategic thinking to drive the creative process. Overall, despite recognition of the value of strategic thinking to support an operational focus, it was seen as a difficult and confusing transition to make.
6.5.4 Synthesis of Results for Research Issue Three: Strategic Thinking

There was agreement that strategic thinking provided a context for the creative process. However, there were multiple contexts in event management, framed by a range of stakeholder influences and agendas. There remained confusion over what was meant by strategic thinking or there was little perceived value or benefit of strategic thinking to the day-to-day running of an event. Some felt strategic thinking to be essential and a way of providing clarity to the creative process, others found the process constraining. The creative process remained operationally led, with frustration in some circles at this reality. The operationally led, SME culture of event management highlighted in the previous chapter further supports this. The operational focus, rather than any strategic imperative, set the context for the creative process. Where there was no specific guiding direction for the creative, the process was freewheeling, led by stakeholder whim and dominated by the strongest influencers in the organisation. New event ideas or variations on existing themes were validated through operational realities rather than strategic direction. Practical realities were given precedence in idea creation.

The final section brings the results of the three research issues together and forms a chapter conclusion.
6.6 **Chapter Conclusion**

There emerged from the research a number of interconnected themes that evidence an operationally dominant approach to the practice of event management. Challenges in event management identified in the research were exacerbated by this operational bias. There was an operational reaction to challenges each time they were faced. These challenges were difficult to overcome with existing practices. The project based nature of the creative process made envisioning broader alternative solutions difficult. There was a feeling of limited control.

‘Busy doing time’ and lack of resources left much of the creative process reacting to multiple stakeholder requirements, unable to consider the broader issues. There was no strategic thinking to guide the process in one clear direction, rather multiple approaches. The operational processes in event management and the subsequent characteristics of and influences on the creative process were at odds with the bigger picture approach implied by strategic thinking. There was frustration that event management remained operationally focused with little control over the wider situation.

There was confusion over the term strategic thinking and skepticism in some quarters about the benefit of applying such a paradigm to the event management creative process. Figure XXIII styled on the conceptual model
in chapter 2 illustrates the relationship between these three research issues. It is the ‘as is’ framework based on the results of the research and is subsequently explained.

**Figure XXIII. Framework of Results based on Themes and Research Issues**

The themes drawn from the research results (RT1-3) are identified next to each research issue (RI1-3). There were *procedural, definition and perception, retention and competitive challenges* in event management that could be potentially addressed through the creative process. The parent literatures of the creative process and event management are connected.
This is due to event management being identified as a creative medium in both the literature and in the research. However, this process was characterised by operational, project-based, convergent/inconsistent and reactive activities. Further it was affected by a combination of task based, organisational and individual influences.

There was little or no context provided by strategic thinking to the creative process in event management. It was cited as important to the process but not often practiced. Planning and operations created inconsistency through multiple frames for the creative process. Strategic thinking and its concern with setting a broader context was often confused with the more operational nature of strategic planning. The creative process was dominated by the operational imperative of planning and execution. Thinking and planning were seen as two distinct approaches rather than complimentary and supportive of the creative process. A tension existed between the perceived order value of strategic thinking and the perceived chaos value of a freewheeling creative process.

For this reason, strategic thinking was an outlier, not connected to the creative process in event management or applied to the challenges of event management. This is reflected in the ‘as is’ framework in Figure XXIII.
The next and concluding chapter discusses the framework identified from these results in the context of the conceptual work in the literature. From this discussion a detailed explanation of the relationship between event management challenges, the creative process and strategic thinking leads to an answer to the research question.
Chapter 1 first introduced this research question, highlighting three related research issues in the context of this thesis. Chapter 2 explored the literature related to three parent literatures of event management, the creative process and strategic thinking. The convergence of these three parent literatures led to the development of a conceptual framework and the three research issues. These issues were explored in the field in order to answer the research question. Chapter 3 outlined the research method used to explore the research issues. This method was qualitative in nature and consisted of an ethnographic journey immersing the researcher in an event management setting. Chapter 4 elaborated further on this setting, which was based in the Australian city of Melbourne. The research included a
longitudinal event case study in the form of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. This study constituted the main setting of the research and was the main source of research data. Chapter 5 introduced the research results through a consideration of the diverse views obtained in the field. This ensured both representative and minority voices were heard. Chapter 6 described the results of the research in the field and was presented based around themes emerging from the three research issues. Key findings were supported with quotes and excerpts from the data.

This final chapter 7 discusses the research results in the context of the literature detailed in chapter 2 and presents conclusions, contributions to theory and implications for future research. The chapter is organised according to chapter flow in Figure XXIV as follows. Section 7.1 introduces and summarises the contributions made by this research. The conclusions for each of the three research issues are presented alongside the literature detailed in chapter 2. Section 7.2 presents final conclusions and answers the research question. The answer is provided through development of the model based on the original conceptual framework outlined at the end of chapter 2 and the results in chapter 5. Sections 7.3 propose the implications of this research for theory. Section 7.4 discusses limitations of the research and recommendations for further research in this area and finally section 7.5 presents a final chapter conclusion.
Figure XXIV. Chapter 7 Structure

7.1 Conclusions about the three Research Issues

The findings in chapter 6 are now evaluated in the context of the literature outlined in chapter 2. This identifies the research conclusions and new contributions these findings make to theory. Table DD details the research issues, conclusions and the contribution made through the issues explored in this thesis.

The first column lists each of the three research issues emerging from the literature and explored in the research. The conclusions drawn from the research results are detailed in the second column. The contribution to the existing literature is explained in the third and final column. The contribution levels are described utilising the approach advocated by Perry (1998), as follows: ‘Some extent’ means a number of authors in the literature made reference to these emerging themes. ‘Small extent’ indicates that a very limited number of authors speculated on the issues but there was no empirical testing conducted. New areas which have not to date been addressed in the literature at the time of thesis publication are indicated with a ‘none’ entry. EM is used to denote contributions to knowledge of Event
Management, with CP as contributions to the Creative Process and ST representing contributions to Strategic Thinking. Each of these contributions and the conclusions around each research issue are then discussed in detail. Alongside the literature, these conclusions relate to the research findings gathered from the ethnographic journey (see chapter 6).
## Table DD. Summary of Conclusions and their Contribution to the Research Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Issues</th>
<th>Conclusions from this Research</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| RI1             | Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.  
1.1. Procedural, operational issues such as finance, risk, administration and reporting dominated the allocation of limited resources in event management.  
1.2. Event management was difficult to define. This represented a challenge to the value of event management as a profession. It is still perceived as ‘party planning.’  
1.3. The ‘lumpy’, unpredictable nature of event management facilitated a project-based approach to staff recruitment. This led to low retention levels and the exit of knowledge post-event.  
1.4. The lack of clear industry definitions for event management created internal competition and fragmentation. No single voice or peak body represents the industry. | Some extent (EM)       |
|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Small extent (EM)      |
|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Small extent (EM)      |
|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Small extent (EM)      |
| RI2             | Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little or no research into the                                                                                                                                 | None (EM)             |
|                 | 2.1. There was an operational focus to the creative process. It was driven by the imperative of executing events with short time frames and limited resources.  
2.2. There was a convergent approach to creativity in event management. The focus was on problem solving through reapplication of set techniques and utilisation of existing, proven practices.  
2.3. The unpredictable nature of event management determined an inconsistent, | Small extent (CP), none (EM) |
|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | None (EM)             |
### Research Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sporadic response to creative issues, which were dealt with as and when they arose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event management is characterised by small, project-based teams led by an owner operator or board appointed CEO. This cultural environment led to a tactical, 'small business' approach to the creative process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event management creative process was reactive to changes in the broader environment rather than able to manage or control such changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task based time constraints in a deadline driven environment influenced the creative process negatively. The time to think freely was seen as positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, culture, stakeholder and audience expectations influenced the organisational framing of the creative process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal trust levels, individual experience and personality influenced the individual framing of the creative process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conclusions from this Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic thinking was recognised as important to the creative process in event management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic thinking is not currently applied to the creative process in event management due to operational, financial and cultural constraints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Contribution

| Small extent (EM), small extent (CP) |
| Small extent (EM), small extent (CP) |
| None (EM), Some extent (CP) |
| None (EM), some extent (CP) |
| None (EM) |
| None (EM), some extent (CP) |
| None (EM), Some extent (CP & ST) |
| None (EM) |
Research Issues | Conclusions from this Research | Contribution
--- | --- | ---
complement its current operational focus. | 3.3: There was consensus that strategic thinking could set a context or framework for the creative process. However there was tension between the order of a strategic context and the chaos of freewheeling creativity. 3.4: There was a lack of understanding of the characteristics and meaning of strategic thinking. The terms strategy, strategic planning and strategic thinking were used interchangeably. | None (EM), some extent (CP & ST) None (EM), small extent (CP), some extent (ST) |
7.1.1 Conclusions on Research Issue One (RI1)

(RI1) Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management.

In order to answer the research question, this research first addressed the challenges in event management. These challenges were originally explored in the literature through an environmental scan (Aguilar, 1967; Reinhardt, 1984) of the event management literature. This scan consisted mainly of a structured PESTEL analysis (Luffman, Lea, & Kenny, 1996; Lynch, 1997). This analysis identified the ‘macro’ political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal issues expressed in the literature. Further to this analysis the structural challenges facing event management were explored alongside calls for future research in the literature (Getz, 2000b). This exploration revealed event management as an emergent and professionalising field (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2008; Getz, 2002). There were attempts to define event management in the context of other fields such as project management and tourism. However there was a lack of a specific and clear definition of event management in the literature.

During the research period a burgeoning literature developed around the format and structure of event management in the context of future challenges. The major research focus of the last decade has been
quantitative in nature, exploring for example the economic impact of events (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005). Sustainable (ecological) event management practice was also a dominant emergent theme (Jones, Sustainable event management: a practical guide, 2010). There were calls for a greater understanding of this emerging field, including more qualitative research to supplement the predominance of quantitative based work (Getz, 2000b; Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010; Robson, 2008).

The field research undertaken in this thesis first investigated the challenges facing event management. This set the context for the subsequent exploration of strategic thinking and the creative process in order to answer the research question and issues derived from the parent literatures. This was achieved through a longitudinal, ethnographic immersion in an event management setting. The conclusions about each of the challenges identified in this empirical study are now discussed to identify their contribution in relation to the existing literature. These contributions are also summarised in Table DD.

*Conclusion 1.1: Procedural, operational issues in event management such as finance, risk, administration and reporting dominate the limited resources available.*
This research concluded that a challenge in event management was the predominant focus on procedures and processes. The literature, itself being dominated by published work on the operational issues of event management, confirmed this challenge. The financial and governance issues emerging from the research such as funding, risk management and environmental sustainability are reflected in the literature. The environmental scan conducted in chapter 2 revealed a number of broader issues explored in the literature, which forced an operational and procedural bias.

Environmental sustainability (Jones, Sustainable event management: a practical guide, 2010; Mair & Jago, 2010), consumer confidence in discretionary spending on leisure activities such as events, the triple-bottom-line (TBL) socio-economic impact of events (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005), measurement of impact (Jago, Fredline, Raybould, & Deery, 2005), government policy on arts funding (Johanson & Glow, 2008), investment in infrastructure (Laurie & McDonald, 2008), social trends in communication (Howard, 2006), risk management and litigation, (Tarlow, 2002; Kemp, 2009; Power, 2004), and changes in technology were all cited as having an impact on event management. These procedural themes dominated the discussions within the researched organisations. The case study organisation and broader context setting discussions in the
research confirmed that an operational imperative drives the culture and processes in event management. This research therefore confirms that operational issues dominate event management. Furthermore the research makes a contribution by proposing the impacts of an operational focus should be considered in both theory and practice.

**Conclusion 1.2: Event management is difficult to define. This represents a challenge to the perceived value of event management as a profession.**

There are many descriptions of events in the literature across varying event types (Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2006; Goldblatt, 2000; Getz, 1997; Harris R. , Jago, Allen, & Huyskens, 2000; Jago & Shaw, 1998). The audiences and stakeholders across these communities are wide ranging and the objectives behind each event are varied (Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2006; Getz, 1997). The extant literature does not draw any particular collective conclusions on how to define particular forms of events. There is no standard definition for each of the broad range of event types (Getz, 2000b). Different meanings have been assigned to key terms such as ‘special events’, ‘mega events’, ‘hallmark events’ or ‘business events’ (Stokes, 2003). Other events literature refers to event typologies (Shone & Parry, 2004) but does not go as far as defining event management. The Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK)
(Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) calls for research into defining event management more formally. There is a range of definitions in the literature for event management but no one overriding definition is widely agreed upon. The broad nature of events leads to definitions in the literature to be focused around event types as much as event practices. Event management was defined in chapter 2 for the purposes of this thesis and considered not only event types and practices but also the particular and temporal nature of events.

This conclusion confirms empirically the sentiments reflected in the literature, that definitions are unclear. One, clear definition of event management is not available from the theory, despite burgeoning literature on the subject. This research makes a further contribution to the knowledge on event definitions through the definition presented in chapter 2 and also presents further empirical evidence confirming the existence of the definition challenge. In terms of the perception of event management as a professional field, research has been conducted into the characteristics of event managers through an analysis of job advertisements (Arcodia & Barker, 2002). However, no specific investigation has taken place with regard to the broader perception of event management. The notion of a perception problem with the image of event management as an emerging
professional field as unearthed in this research has not been investigated further in the literature to date.

Conclusion 1.3: The ‘lumpy’, unpredictable nature of event management facilitates a project-based approach to staff recruitment. This leads to low retention levels and the exit of knowledge post-event.

The research suggested that event management is considered an under-resourced field. The project-by-project nature leads to high attrition rates and the ‘burn and churn’ of event staff. The transient style of events leads to little perceived permanence to roles and loss of knowledge at the end of an event. There is often a need to start afresh with each new project, thus contributing to the resource issue. Lack of a history means little organisational culture and short-term based teams. The main case study organisation was working to address this through a funded permanent staff base. Most of the events literature in this context is focused around volunteers and methods of recruiting and retaining them (Hanlon & Jago, 2004; Baum, Deery, Hanlon, Lockstone, & Smith, 2009; Lockstone, Holmes, Smith, & Baum, 2010). Many part-time personnel involved in events generally begin to look elsewhere for employment in the concluding stages of the event (Hede & Rentschler, 2007; Graham, Goldblatt, & Delpy, 1995; Hanlon & Cuskelly, 2002). The majority of event personnel are seasonal,
with return rates affected by the external environment (Warn, 1994). The findings of this thesis contribute to the understanding of retention issues in event management.

Conclusion RI1.4: The lack of clear industry definitions for event management leads to internal competition and fragmentation. No single voice or peak body represents the industry.

The research suggested there is a crowded calendar with limited audiences for events. This applied in particular to the events organised by those researched but it was also implied as a societal trend. This could lead to event fatigue if audiences are feeling over exposed to the event medium. The literature reflected this challenge. Diminishing authenticity (Getz, 2002) is a concern for the industry as events reach saturation point (Jones, Narasimhan, & Alvarez, 2005). Event organizers are finding it increasingly difficult to compete for audiences (Rolfe, 1992). Unique event styles, novelties and visual impacts are becoming emphasised to motivate audiences to attend (Britton, 1991; Janiskee, 1996). The longer-term waning effect experienced by events, which must continuously reinvent to survive is also mentioned in the literature (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

The research highlighted the challenge of no one representative voice for event management in terms of a peak or industry body. While in research
some of the event associations were known anecdotally, the literature provides a listing of those in Australia (Wrathall & Gee, 2011). This lack of one voice is compounded by the lack of a definition of event management. There is little published on the structure and impact of professional associations (Rodenhauser, 1999; Arcodia & Reid, 2002b). As yet, there is limited academic research focusing on event management associations in general (Arcodia & Reid, 2002a) and none investigating their goals and objectives. This research does not contribute to this gap in the literature but serves as additional evidence that more investigation into events associations is required.

### 7.1.2 Summary of Conclusions on Research Issue One (RI1)

In summary, the challenges facing event management are resource and process derived. The wider challenges identified in the literature reflect the day to day challenges from the research. However, much of the literature on event challenges is dominated by conceptual research around specific themes, such as sustainability and economic impact. There have been calls in the literature for research into social and emotional aspects of event management. The domain suffers from a quantitative led approach to research. The qualitative results of this research project represent an advance on previous research, with new contributions to the literature made on the themes explored within research issue one and the parent theory of
event management. Overall, the findings in this thesis on the issue make a contribution to literature comprising a limited number of empirical investigations of these themes.

7.1.3 Conclusions on Research Issue Two (RI2)

(RI2) Event management is a creative industry and creativity is cited as a core value of event management. However, there is little or no research into the characteristics of the creative process and the influences on the creative process in event management.

The research issue highlights that the creative process in event management has not been explored in the literature. As such this research represents a contribution to understanding more about this process as important to event management as a creative industry. However, much has been published in the area of creativity and the characteristics of the creative process. The broad literature on the characteristics of and the influences on the creative process were identified in detail in the literature review in chapter 2. The conclusions of this thesis discuss the specific aspects of the creative process in relation to event management in order to support the answer to the research question. They are explicated as follows.
Conclusion 2.1: There was an operational focus to the creative process. It was driven by the imperative of executing events with short time frames and limited resources.

The research showed that senior management had an operational style in leading the creative process. They drove creative behaviours through this management and leadership style. The literature on creative processes suggests that leadership must be concerned with broader, rather than operational issues to facilitate creativity (Zhou & Shalley, 2008). The behaviour of staff in the researched organisations was also driven by short-term measurement through tactically based objectives. This led to a focus on execution of the tactical requirements of the event rather than any broader considerations. Operational and project management skills are seen as of value in the event management literature (Kerzner, 2009). There is limited literature discussing the creative process in event management. One valuable study by Chen (2009) discussed creativity within the organisational setting of the Burning Man Festival in Nevada, U.S. with the challenge of over and under organising the creative process. However, little attention is given to the issue of an operational focus to creativity and there is no empirical work in Australia. Literature has been published on the creative process in the development of tourism experiences but not specifically events (Han, 2012; Richards & Wilson, 2006). Creativity in
special events in the context of problem solving has been explored but only in a partially completed study (Ross, 2008). The results of this thesis represent a contribution to the area of knowledge and understanding of the nature of the creative process in event management. In particular the identification and acknowledgement that this creative process is both operational in nature and operationally led. Creativity is cited as a core value of event management in the EMBOK model (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). Creativity is also viewed in the literature as important to the development of useful and novel solutions to challenges, such as those in event management. Event management is part of the economically important creative industries. As such this thesis contributes to the understanding of the creative process in a creative industry in Australia.

**Conclusion 2.2:** There was a convergent approach to creativity in event management. The focus was on problem solving through reapplication of set techniques and utilising existing, proven practices.

The research results demonstrated that the creative process in event management was risk-averse and financially driven in character. The approach was convergent in nature with new challenges met through existing practices. In the case study organisation there were attempts to develop fresh creative processes through a revised organisational structure.
However, stakeholder demands and resources often impeded this action. This was in contrast to the theory surrounding the creative process described in the literature. Divergent thinking to uncover the useful, novel and relevant was seen as integral to the process. In the context of event management this was not always realisable, leading to set patterns of creative behaviour. Such behaviour drove the use of safe ideas and attention focused on detail level implementation. This conclusion contributes to the understanding of the creative process in event management. This process has limited exploration or explanation in the extant literature. The difference in creative approaches across artistic and scientific fields has been explored (Feldman, Csikzenmihayli, & Gardner, 1994; Kyffin & Veronesi, 1998) but no specific literature has been published in this area relating to event management. The problem solving study conducted by Ross (2008) does not investigate the notion of convergent thinking. Chermahini & Hommel (2011) and Cropley (2006) have elaborated on the differences and influences of convergent and divergent thinking but not in the context of event management. These findings contribute to a gap in this literature.

Conclusion 2.3: The unpredictable nature of event management determined an inconsistent, sporadic response to creative issues, which were dealt with as and when they arose.
There is a lack of historical context for many event staff and the high turnover of staff highlighted as a challenge exacerbates this issue. The temporal nature of events and the subsequent management processes prohibit a clear framework within which the creative process exists. Without this framework the creative process is freewheeling, leading to frustration in event management environments characterised by limited resources and strict deadlines. Without such a framework there is inconsistency in the creative process. On the one hand, the wheel is reinvented unnecessarily as knowledge exits an organisation and there is no prior context for reacting to creative challenges. On the other hand, the convergent nature of the creative process leads to safe ideas being used repeatedly so the creative process is unable to break out of its existing cycle. There has been research work on the turnover of staff in events (Hanlon & Jago, 2004). This suggests that such turnover often results in organizational ineffectiveness or an unstable workforce (Cooke, 1997). Further literature suggests this can also lead to an inconsistent workflow, and high costs associated with new employee recruitment and training (Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 1996). There has been no specific research into how such staff turnover may impact the creative process in event management. This thesis contributes by associating a lack of historical context on the part of staff with an inconsistent and convergent creative process in event management.
Conclusion 2.4: Event management is characterised by small, project-based teams led by an owner operator or board appointed CEO. This cultural environment led to a tactical, ‘small business’ approach to the creative process.

The research results reflected a culture of hiring, respecting and rewarding tactical behaviours. Most of the event organisations under study, including the longitudinal case organisation, were small or medium sized enterprises. The membership of the International Special Events Society (ISES) in Melbourne who were consulted for this research also comprised mostly small businesses. The nature and skill set of the people in event management has a tendency towards project based and operational skills, reflective of a small business culture. Recruitment policies and reward/management mechanisms reflect this and so these skills were perpetuated. Studies of event management attributes support the view that technical ability is valued over strategic skills (Arcodia & Barker, 2002; Harris & Jago, 1999; Perry, Foley, & Rumph, 1996). Traditional skills such as organisation, financial management, planning and control were viewed as the most important. There was often discussion in the results of focusing on the next task at hand. Limited resources and high staff turnover drove a more tactical approach. Stakeholder pressure also influenced this view. This is discussed in the literature as a driver of event and festival programming.
(Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2007; Mossberg & Getz, 2006). This thesis identifies that there is a focus on the immediate next event rather than on a program or campaign and a lack of consideration of the bigger picture.

**Conclusion 2.5: The event management creative process was reactive to changes in the broader environment rather than able to manage or control such changes.**

The research participants felt a lack of control over wider issues impacting the creative process in event management. Stakeholders dictated the terms leading to a reactive creative process. The process was rarely a clean transition from bigger picture issues to creative, novel and useful solutions as the literature suggests. Stakeholders themselves were not always well versed in the broader issues and this magnified the issue of a reactive creative process. The resources diverted into such responses could have been used to manage or anticipate external impacts at a more holistic level. Furthermore due to the perception issues mentioned earlier there was a ‘how hard can it be’ mentality. These issues have not been discussed in event management literature to date but have an impact on both the creative process and the perception of the emergent field of event management.
These conclusions around the creative process have been concerned with the characteristics of the creative process in event management. While some characteristics are represented in the literature on the creative process, others are more specific and unique to the temporal, stakeholder, small business setting of event management. Understanding more about these characteristics facilitates understanding of the creative process in event management and represents a contribution to knowledge. The next set of conclusions focus on the influences on the creative process in event management.

**Conclusion 2.6: Task based time constraints in a deadline driven environment influenced the creative process negatively. The time to think freely was seen as positive.**

There was little luxury of time allocated to the creative process in event management. Often the process centred on ‘creativity to a deadline’ and influenced the process negatively. There was limited space to reflect upon the broader issues or overall creative direction of an event or program. Culturally, there was more ‘time value’ allocated to operational issues rather than the creative process. Although creativity was seen as of value, the day-to-day was perceived as the priority. Free time outside the pressures and constraints of event delivery was seen as influencing the creative process.
positively. There was a view that creativity cannot be ‘pushed’ and the allocation of preparation time for creative meetings, although not always practical, was seen as yielding positive outcomes creatively. The creativity literature supports the research findings that time pressure will influence the creative process (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Amabile, Arsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Lubart, 2001; Unsworth, 2001). It is suggested the organisational climate will have an impact on how time is managed and allocated (Andriopoulos, 2001). The small business focus and resource hungry organisational climate of event management does not lend itself well currently to enabling creative time. Recognition and understanding of the impact of time on the creative process in event management is of value.

Conclusion 2.7: Leadership, culture, stakeholder and audience expectations influenced the organisational framing of the creative process.

Confidence in leadership played a role in influencing the creative process. In the case study organisation a strong leader and senior management team was seen as setting the framework within which creativity could flourish. An inclusive culture with a senior team taking responsibility for actions out of the creative process was seen as a positive influence. This issue is well documented in the creativity literature with leadership establishing a positive
organisational culture in which the creative process can flourish (Amabile, Arsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Ekvall, 1997; Frost & Egri, 1994; George, 2007; Janssen, 2005). There is very little empirical evidence in the literature in the context of event management. This conclusion addresses the issue.

Staff in the case study organisation became more confident and open to the creative process the longer they stayed in the team. This is a challenge in many event organisations due to the high level of ‘burn and churn’. Junior staff members were less inclined to engage creatively than senior staff and did not feel as empowered to do so. Culturally the creative process remained fixated on projects rather than the wider issues. Core stakeholders and their expectations impacted the creative process. Various group members within the creative process represented the ‘silent’ voice of stakeholders. This is reflected in the event literature on stakeholder management (Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2007; Mossberg & Getz, 2006).

This process was impacted by stakeholder requirements, which had little clearly defined rationale or creative direction. The external expectations of stakeholders represented here as audience members influenced the creative process. Market research on audience sentiments and profiles formed a starting point for the creative process. Being prepared for creative discussions on the part of staff members was often influenced by customer data of this kind. Experience of previous, similar events also played a role in influencing the creative process. There was a balance between the ‘hard’
evidence of customer data and the ‘soft’ and more intuitive approach of gut feel in the creative process.

**Conclusion 2.8: Personal trust levels, individual experience and personality influenced the individual framing of the creative process.**

Personality, position and comfort were all see as influencers on the creative process. Personal insight and experience, alongside intelligence gathered outside the group setting and brought to the table could support and energise the creative process. This is reflected in the broader literature (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004; Martinsen, 2011). Mutual respect for ideas was important for people to feel comfortable sharing their creative thoughts. This comfort level and trust of others was a positive influence on the creative process, with leadership enabling the setting. Conversely, a lack of trust and respect could have a negative impact. Involvement and inclusion was important in fostering trust but consensus decision-making led to last minute event changes and confusion. The creativity literature is well published in this area of individual creative process influences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Bruner, 1962; Feist, 1999). The person P of the 4P model of creativity demonstrates the protagonists and their social milieu have a profound influence on the creative process (Drazin, Glynn, &
Kazanjian, 1999; Rhodes, 1961; Simonton, 1988). Again, little has been published on the protagonists of the creative process in event management.

7.1.4 Summary of Conclusions on Research Issue Two (RI2)
There is much parity with the conclusions on the creative process in event management and the discourse in the literature. In particular the influences on the creative process in terms of task time pressure, organisational culture and individual personality are reflective of the internal aspects of the creative process. The real contribution of this thesis in the context of the creative process comes from understanding more deeply the characteristics of the creative process in event management. The peculiarities of temporary event projects and the implications of this for the creative process are unique to event management and as such support understanding in this field. The operational nature of event creativity leads to a reactive, inconsistent and convergent approach to meeting challenges in event management. Understanding this process more clearly will help to address some of the creative process issues in meeting new challenges.

7.1.5 Conclusions on Research Issue Three (RI3)
(RI3) Application of a strategic thinking paradigm to the creative process in event management can complement its current operational focus.
As established in the previous section the creative process in event management is operational and convergent. Consideration of an alternative more strategic and divergent paradigm is central to the research question posed in this thesis. The final conclusions section discusses the issues surrounding strategic thinking and its relationship to strategic planning and the creative process.

**Conclusion 3.1: Strategic thinking was recognised as important to the creative process in event management.**

The results were clear and there was consensus on this subject. Most participants agreed that the time to think strategically and consider application of this paradigm to the creative process would be of value. However many of those researched did not feel in a position to use strategic thinking in this way and apply it to the operational nature of their roles and tasks. The literature focuses on the value of strategic thinking generically but this value has not been considered in the context of event management and how it applies to the creative process.

**Conclusion 3.2: Strategic thinking was not applied to the creative process in event management due to operational, financial and cultural constraints.**
Despite value being assigned to strategic thinking, the day-to-day operation of the business prohibited anything more than a tactical, operational response to challenges. Issues arising in previous conclusions, such as a small business culture and a reactive and inconsistent creative environment, exacerbated this. The literature on strategic thinking suggests an analytical approach is required to anticipate emergent opportunities (Fairholm & Card, 2009; Liedtka, 1998; Hunter & O’Shannassy, 2007). In theory and under certain conditions this could be applicable but the operational realities of resource hungry event organisations create a barrier to applying strategic thinking. There is an argument to suggest that if event management refocused priorities and resources towards a more strategic paradigm this form of thinking could emerge. Stakeholders and audience research played a role in influencing the strategic and creative process. There was no singular strategic context to support the creative process.

Conclusion 3.3: There was consensus that strategic thinking could set a context or framework for the creative process. However there was tension between the order of a strategic context and the chaos of freewheeling creativity.

The literature suggests, like the quote at the beginning of this chapter, that a formal context can support the creative process. It removes ambiguity from
an otherwise ambiguous process. The ‘freedom of a tight brief’ created a clear context for creativity (Fairholm & Card, 2009). This focus is explicated in the literature and is relevant to the context of this study (Burgelman, 1991). However, as there has been little research into the context of strategic thinking in event management this study represents a contribution to this area. It offers the notion of applying a strategic context to the event creative process. This is core to the research question in this thesis. Conversely too tight a context could be perceived as restraining creativity as too many limitations are applied to a free-spirited creative process. In her Burning Man study, Chen discusses how a previously freewheeling festival organisation has created a context for creativity (Chen, 2009). The organisational structure, rather than strategic thinking, forms the basis of her argument. This thesis argues that such a strategic approach is positive in pushing people out of the day-to-day operational issues and into a more divergent and creative line of thought.

**Conclusion 3.4: There was a lack of understanding of the characteristics and meaning of strategic thinking. The terms strategy, strategic planning and strategic thinking were used interchangeably.**

One of the challenges faced was how to reconcile the day-to-day processes required of event management with the broader issues derived from
strategic thinking to drive the creative process. Overall, despite recognition of the value of strategic thinking to support an operational focus, it was seen as a difficult and confusing transition to make. Strategic thinking is seen as distinct from strategic planning in the literature and for the purposes of this thesis (French, 2009; Shelton & Darling, 2001). However, there was confusion in the field as to what was meant by each. Many of those researched discussed strategy but meant strategic planning in terms of how strategic ideas are implemented through operations. The literature suggests although creativity is essential to both (Gallimore, 2004), strategic thinking is a more holistic and creative function than strategic planning and is relevant in this context. While strategic planning is more focused on the realisation of ideas (Pisapia, 2009), many in the research associated it with high-level conceptualisation. This was at odds with how it was implemented by those under study. There seemed to be a loose connection between strategic thinking and the creative process in the research. In the literature the connection is much clearer as strategic thinking is very much concerned with the creative imagination.

7.1.6 Summary of Conclusions on Research Issue Three (RI3)
The notion of strategic thinking and its role in the creative process is clear in the literature but unclear from the results of this study of event management. Although it is seen as valuable there is confusion as to its
meaning. This creates a dichotomy. How can something be of value if it is not understood? The value assigned to strategic thinking in the literature is the value of ‘big’ thinking (Mintzberg, 1994; Lawrence E., 1999). How can problems be approached in unique and divergent ways? The value assigned to strategic thinking in the research is the value of planning. How can ideas be implemented and realised with the best use of available resources? The operational focus in the event management creative process serves to culturally and structurally reinforce this belief. Furthermore there is a tension between the order of a strategic framework and the desired chaos to achieve a creative outcome. Organise too much and the creativity is stifled but without a clear direction this lack of clarity breeds chaos. Embracing a strategic thinking paradigm in event management creative process requires greater clarity and understanding of the value of the freedom of a tight brief.

7.2 Answer to the Research Question

‘Following a period of strong growth, Victoria’s tourism and events industry is facing new challenges; a “business as usual” approach won’t do.’ — (Tourism Victoria, 2006, p. 7)

The literature on creativity suggests that the creative process thrives in smaller organizations with close-knit teams (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; George, 2007). There is further an established link between
the divergent output of strategic thinking and the creative process (Mintzberg, 1994; Liedtka, 1998). The literature on event management suggests that creativity does indeed exist in event management and is viewed as core to the event management process (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006; Chen, 2009). The research results have established that there is a particular ‘kind’ of creative process in event management: one led by operational imperatives. This leads to consideration of a ‘creativity paradox’ within event management. On the one hand event management should be well disposed to the creative process. It is perceived as a creative industry (Cunningham, 2002; Hartley J., 2005), operating on the fringes of the arts, entertainment and communications sectors. Further, the creative process is seen as important in event management, representing a core value within the event management body of knowledge (EMBOK) (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006). However, the current nature of the creative process is one-dimensional as a result of being subservient to operations. Creativity is defined as divergent thought, which leads to the creation of something novel or useful (Amabile, 1996). In the context of an operational paradigm there is little room for divergent thought and novel creation, rather ‘fire fighting’ and damage limitation. If the creative process is restricted by such operational parameters one could argue that it is not a creative process at all. The current operationally led creative response to challenges is binary. The
reaction is mechanical and one-dimensional. The options are black or white, with no shades of grey. This leads to emerging challenges being dealt with in current ways. There is limited scope to break out of the existing process cycle. Answering the ‘how’ questions becomes the focus.

This thesis has asked the question: (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’ The answer to this question considers a shift in the creative paradigm in event management. A creative response to challenges driven by strategic thinking rather than operations is non-binary. The reaction is interpretive and multi-dimensional but still exists and is managed within a contextual framework and focus. Emerging issues can be dealt with in a range of ways through the context set by strategic thinking. This encourages lateral, divergent thought with issues addressed in a multitude of styles to generate the ‘useful and the novel’. There is a full colour spectrum of possibilities. Thought can exist outside the ‘zeros and ones’ of operational dominance. Answering the ‘why’ questions becomes the focus.

The Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK), (Rutherford-Silvers, Bowdin, O’Toole, & Nelson, 2006) identified strategic thinking and creativity as core values of event management but little or no research has been conducted to explore this. The conceptual framework in chapter 2 of this
thesis allowed development of the research issues through an exploration of three parent literatures: event management, the creative process and strategic thinking. The conceptual framework suggested that there was an existing relationship between event management and the creative process. It further suggested the creative process and strategic thinking were also connected but that there was no literature to support a connection between strategic thinking and event management. The conceptual framework proposed a fit between all three of these parent literatures, which identified the research issues to be explored in the field. The research results in chapter 5 revealed the creative process in event management is operationally led. Strategic thinking sits as a well-reputed but poorly understood outlier to the process. Figure XXV adapts the conceptual framework from chapter 2 and the summary model from chapter 6 to illustrate the current position of the three parent literatures in the context of the research in order to answer the research question.
The current flow of the process can be explained through the three chronological phases outlined in this model.

In **phase one**, event management (operations) dominate the creative process. This current operationally led process is being used to meet the challenges identified through research issue one in this thesis.

In **phase two** the characteristics of the creative process explored through research issue two are influenced by operational response to challenges. This leads to a convergent, reactive and inconsistent creative process. The focus is on the ‘how’.
In phase three strategic thinking is seen as important but not applied or understood as explored in research issue three. There is a gap between the parent literatures of event management and the creative process and strategic thinking. Strategic thinking remains an outlier to the creative process in event management.

The contribution made in this thesis is focused on understanding the relationship between these parent literatures. Identification of strategic thinking as an outlier makes a further contribution. The next iteration of the model in Figure XXVI explicates how the proposed paradigm could shift to a creative process led by strategic thinking in order to shape the creative process in event management. Thus through this model the research question central to this thesis is answered and an original contribution to event management knowledge is made.
The proposed flow of the process is explained through a reconfiguring of the three chronological phases outlined in the previous model. The three phases are focused around a strategic, rather than operational paradigm to answer the research question (RQ) ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?.

In **phase one**, strategic thinking provides a contextual framework within which the creative process can flourish as explored through research issue three. This is the approach to meeting the requirements of emergent challenges.
In **phase two** the characteristics of the creative process explored through research issue two are impacted by strategic consideration of these challenges. The creative process has a context provided by strategic thinking. This leads to a divergent, validated and multi-dimensional creative process. The focus is on the ‘**why**’.

In **phase three** a strategically informed creative process drives event operations and the strategic planning of those operations. This process is used to meet the emergent challenges explored through research issue one. There is convergence of the parent literatures of event management and the creative process with strategic thinking. There is a paradigm shift as strategic thinking becomes the **driver** of the creative process in event management.

This conceptual model based on empirical research evidence provides an alternative paradigm to drive the creative process in event management. This previously unexplored territory enables a clearer understanding of the processes in event management as a significant and emerging field of academic research and discourse.

### 7.3 Implications for Theory

There are a number of implications for future research arising from these research conclusions. Generally there are topics emerging from each set of
conclusions for each research issue. Further implications can be derived from the current and suggested future creative paradigms illustrated through the conceptual models (Figures XXV and XXVI in section 7.2).

7.4 Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this research were identified and justified in chapter 1 of this thesis. As a qualitative piece, the research is limited to the data collected and analysed during the ‘ethnographic journey’. Further quantitative studies could be conducted to extend the scope of the research. The creative process and strategic thinking are difficult concepts to grasp ‘scientifically’ so any broader scope could be informed by qualitative ‘narrow and deep’ investigations.

Events include many actors and future research could segment various groups and research the differing perspectives of those groups. For example, what approach to the creative process is taken in large scale sporting events? What direct implication does this creative process have for visitors and therefore tourism? This study contributes to our overall understanding of the creative process in event management and the nature of that process. Research that evaluates this process in terms of broader impacts could provide a valuable tool for measuring the value of the creative process in event management. Given the issues of perception and retention raised in this thesis, another area of future research would be to investigate
the careers of event managers. The pressure of individual projects heavily influences event management careers. There is much published in the HRM and creative industries literature regarding project based or protean career management (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall & Moss, 1998). Research through in depth interviews with career event managers may elaborate on the particular nature and attractiveness of the event management career in this context.

Finally, due to the strategic nature of the thinking proposed in this thesis, further research into event management leadership could be considered. Investigations into the nature of leadership as well as the qualities possessed by event managers could provide an insight into how strategic thinking could be applied to the creative process at a senior level now and into the future. As the events sector becomes more crowded with activities and expertise, this kind of research may provide insight into how certain forms and practices of event management can maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

7.5 Chapter Conclusion

‘Now that I think about it, the difference between tactically led [event] agency and a creative led [event] agency is the strategy, because the strategy gives you your creative direction’ – Depth Interview: Industry Immersion A
The above quotation from the data obtained in this research represents a voice from the fringes. It is an outlying view when compared to the majority of participants in the research and the extant event management literature. It suggests that a minority considers strategic thinking as a possible driver of the creative process in event management. This thesis answers the research question by proposing such a paradigm shift.

The research presented in this thesis was motivated by a belief in the power of events. The live event is considered a creative and emotional medium. This is evidenced by the feelings we recall from our own first ‘event’. Organisers and audiences engage in a connected and participatory creative experience. The live, temporal aspect of this process makes an event unique when compared to any other project. Yet, this research has shown the creative process in event management to be preoccupied with ‘humdrum inputs’ (Caves, 2000, p. 4). The operational, tactical mechanics take precedence over broader, emotional and arguably nobler motivations. Humdrum is of course important. Without it audiences and organisers are at physical and financial risk. However, this thesis has considered whether it should drive the creative process.

Events are socially, culturally and economically constructed phenomena that require deconstruction to fully understand how and why they function as
they do. The call for research in event management is derived from a range of contexts. The last three major conferences on event management research in Australia have focused on economic contributions (UTS: Australian Centre of Event Management, 2005); communities and destinations (UTS: Australian Centre of Event Management, 2007); and environmental issues (UTS: Australian Centre of Event Management, 2009). The event management landscape is evolving as it meets new challenges. Societal and cultural shifts are impacting the ways in which we consume and engage with media. Events remain an important contingent of our social, cultural and economic capital. Events have become a serious and valid communications form and the management of such is worthy of detailed study. This thesis contributes to the increasingly valuable body of knowledge in this burgeoning field of academic study and discourse.

The research findings presented are specific to one setting in one country. They focus mainly on one event organisation. However, a number of general conclusions are drawn. These conclusions contribute to the theory development of strategic thinking and the creative process in event management and can be summarised as follows:

The study did not provide evidence of premeditated use of strategic thinking to drive the creative process in event management. However there was
evidence that strategic thinking occurred in an ad hoc manner. Further, the study shows that value was assigned to its influence on the creative process by management and stakeholders. Given the perceived value of strategic thinking, a great deal more could be done in event management to facilitate such a paradigm. It is important to continue with further research on this issue.

There are wider implications of the current operational approach to the creative process in event management identified in this thesis. The notion of event management as operationally driven has led to industry wide perception and retention issues that exacerbate the problem. Event management is ‘adolescent’ in its stage of development as a professional field. Research investigating the event management profession is important to understand and further explore the possible shift from the humdrum of ‘doing’ to ‘thinking’.

A final model is proposed in the context of applying the theory in practice. It has been established from the literature and in this research that events are broad, diverse and unique in nature. The variables at play in strategic thinking, the creative process and event management will be deployed in varying degrees. This variation will depend on the nature of the event, the
demands of external stakeholders and the skills, experience and leadership of the event organisation and its people.

Figure XXVII outlines the relationship between these variables and invites consideration of such a model for application.

**Figure XXVII. The Triangular Model of the Strategic Thinking-Creative Process in Event Management**

The model is triangular to emphasise the balance required between the vision articulated by strategic thinking, the ideas generated by the creative process and the management outputs required in the successful implementation of an event. There are a number of variables within this
triangular framework that influence the optimum balance required. These variables will range in emphasis, depending on the nature and needs of the event. The model suggests that one size does not fit all but in order for an event to succeed all three must be applied, though not in equal measure.

In conclusion this thesis has considered a paradigm shift in the approach to the creative process in event management. Strategic thinking is considered as a method of divergent thought to envision alternative realities. In order to evolve and meet future challenges a diverse range of strategic thinking, planning and acting activities is required to complement existing methodologies (Landry, 2000). If such activities were applied to the creative process in event management, what implications could this have for audiences, stakeholders and the future of the events industry?
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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Depth Interview Discussion Guide

Duration: Approximately 60 minutes

Location: various for industry context and predominantly Festival Meeting Room for Longitudinal Study

Recorded using iTalk device and transcribed by researcher/university services

**Topic One (Two minutes)**

Welcome, introduction and thank you

**Topic Two (Three minutes)**

Statement on research ethics:

All data strictly confidential

Transcribed by interviewer and references to sensitive material removed

Files held securely at Deakin

Formal permission to record obtained

**Topic Three (Five minutes)**
Set scene and reiterate/brief overview of research topic: ‘How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?’

Introduce rationale and background of Festival case study choice

**Topic Four (Five minutes)**

Please summarise briefly your background and your role/involvement with the Festival

**Topic Five (Ten minutes)**

Can you give me your view of the events sector and the challenges it faces including what you think a live event/event manager is?

**Topic Six (Ten minutes)**

Leading on from this we consider part of the process of event management: the creative process. What is this to you and how does it work in the context of your role?

**Topic Seven (Ten minutes)**

My research also considers the idea that event managers collaborate creatively to develop ideas during the creative process. What is your view on this and how does that relate to your role?

**Topic Eight (Ten minutes)**
Based on what you have just said about the creative process, what do you think can help the creative process flourish and equally what restricts the creative process?

**Topic Six (Five minutes)**

Finally, part of my research suggests that event managers and the sector do not think strategically enough about the challenges they face. What is your view on this and how do you think strategic thinking relates to the creative process?

Close and conclude with an invitation for any other comments. Thank you for your time.
9.2 Appendix B – Excerpt from Industry Journal: Informal Panel Discussions

Tuesday 9th June 2009

I am beginning to get a sense for the value of events to the people of Melbourne. One of the presentations at the City of Melbourne talked about a ‘supportive public’ and you definitely get that impression in this city. That if you run an event then it’s pretty likely you’ll get a great enthusiastic group turning up to join in.

One of the other things which strikes me about all of this is the importance of events to a wider group than just corporate clients. I have always been clear about this but the general public truly see the value of events. I can’t work out whether this is a Melbourne thing, whether it’s an emerging trend or whether it’s a broader shift which I simply hadn’t noticed before because I was too close to the idea of events being a means to a financial end for a corporate client.

People here love events! I know I do too but didn’t realize the extent of how important they are to people. This isn’t really a core part of the research but it does show you there is something valuable in understanding more about this side of life.

Hereby I feel I have established an original contribution. The energy around events in Melbourne has reminded me of their value and impact. The challenge seems to be there is a lack of understanding of the back-story of any event. Most of the people I talk to are skilled in the operational side of events. If anything they have been drawn to the industry through a love of such organizational and operational issues. They like to solve problems:
how do we make this work? How do we get that on a stage? How can we create an extravaganza? There is energy and excitement about the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the event. The production of the event and the way in which to drive people to attend seem to the things that drive the majority of the people I am talking to.
9.3 Appendix C – Excerpt from Researcher Journal:
Participant Observations from Longitudinal Case Study

Friday August 7th 2009

Programming – decision making meeting on key elements of festival program moving forward

Nice bubble up process going on today. Longitudinal F/H sparking off one another and bringing in other event experience/observations to add to the creative discourse: previous MFAWF/Atlantic launch/longest lunch/harbour bridge breakfast etc.

Challenge that creative ideas cannot operate in a vacuum. Key stakeholders will all play a significant role in scoping event concepts. ‘Silent’ voice of stakeholders represented by various team members who all have different roles/issues to table: sponsors/government/audiences/venues/politics/previous history etc. Some of these discussions create a ‘swingometer’ between creative scoping and conceptualisation and creative problem solving – i.e. from the strategic to the tactical or from the macro to the micro – inevitable part of the process and interesting.
9.4 **Appendix D – Excerpt from Semi-Structured Industry Immersion Depth Interview Transcription**

**Researcher:**

You were saying that the strategy kind of helps to set the framework almost, I guess, for the creativity. A sense of direction.

**Immersion A:**

That's right, a sense of direction for where the creative is going to go. We did one for XXX. XXX is one of our clients. We did a creative look for them, and we said to her, ‘What is the single out-take you want from this?’ and she said that recommendation matters. Recommendation from the breeders, from the pet store owners, from vets, it all matters. We give it to strategy, and strategy looks at what are breeders up to? What's their thinking, what are their triggers, what makes them want to endorse your product? Then the strategists looked at what makes vets want to do this, what makes pet store owners want to?

Then from that they came up with being a big part of the winning team, being the best in show. So then they passed that on to the creative team, and the creative team works to best in show. So everything is about, you know, how do we unpack best in show, and then the tactics come out of that. But without the strategy, we could've just said ‘Best in show? No, I think it’s a puppy in every back yard’. It then just becomes, and I'm not saying this very clearly, it becomes subjective. There is subjectivity in the tactics, but you can’t argue with the strategy.
So if you don’t like – Jon, I’ve pitched you this – you don’t like best in show, do you agree that we understand your audience? OK, so what don’t you like about best in show? I don’t think it should be blue? OK, why? Well I don’t really like blue. OK, but can you see why we chose blue, because best in show is a blue ribbon and that’s why you choose blue because it- Oh, OK. So I got that you don’t like blue, I don’t particularly care for it either, but in this context, and with this strategy backing it, blue makes sense, doesn’t it? Ah, yes, blue makes sense – I get it.
9.5 **Appendix E – Excerpt from Longitudinal Semi-Structured Depth Interview Transcription: Pre Event**

**Longitudinal M:**

.......For individuals like X and I who depend on that kind of strategic foundation to understand how my activity fits in and around that, and I've always worked in agencies where there has been a whole lot of strategy. And I've always been part of the development of that strategy and the implementation, so sitting outside of a strategic plan doesn't feel great for me. I think it’s something we need to commit to fast-tracking as an organisation. We’re on the cusp of that at the moment, and there’s been a whole lot of stuff that’s, you know, the reason behind the delays, and what-not - probably not all that relevant to this discussion.

But, yes, I would agree with you. It’s kind of the research and development side of things, isn’t it? They are the first things that fall off, you’re quite right, when you are trying to keep your head above water in the events sense. I think, too, that quite often there’s, and this is sort of related, with an annual event there is such a period of complete exhale after the event finishes, that people need to have that downtime, that really you kick back into that cycle with an event the size of the Festival very quickly….. So because of the chaotic pace it is very difficult to set downtime aside to write nice-to-have things like a strategic plan, which I see as completely fundamental and essential, but they are considered by many people to be, ‘Yes, we’ll get to that’, and I can understand that.
9.6 Appendix F – Excerpt from Longitudinal Semi-Structured Interview Notes: Post Event

Longitudinal D:

Where’s the strategy folks?

- The recent debrief and planning session from the last festival allowed ideas to free flow, She felt this was a very dangerous exercise as it set expectations that people’s ideas were going to be adopted but with little or no framework. She felt this became an internal PR exercise and it would be unlikely that any/few of these ideas would be adopted as was implied.
- The lack of any framework of strategic direction as far as she can see has led to a series if key challenges and issues on the last festival which, if not resolved will apply again to the next festival....
- There seems to be a business strategy around which marketing led themes are developed. This short term, sales focused view is not a strategy and leads to a very reactive and exhausting approach where loose themes are driving the creativity of event design rather than a coherent strategy.....
- Where is the strategy document for the above? She has not seen this document and is unsure if it really exists.....
- If it does exist then there is a lack of transparency in communication of strategy.
- In terms of culture and how this translates into an appropriate environment for creativity her view is that the organisation finds it difficult to deal with the ‘hard stuff’ – the confronting issues and challenges where some negativity may have to be discussed.
• Final issue is what is the festival actually? Who is it right now and what do we want it to be? Where’s the brand of the festival? ‘I don’t know who I work for’
• The above lack of structure has led to lost coherence in terms of the event delivery. There were no expectations set.
• Is there any succession planning? – knowledge/understanding /culture – what happens when someone leaves and new people need to embrace this? What are they embracing?
9.7 Appendix G – Research Matrices

Table EE. Research Matrix presenting Research Issues and Associated Literature and Research Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>How does strategic thinking shape the creative process in event management?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 2</td>
<td>PARENT LITERATURES</td>
<td>Event Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 3</td>
<td>LITERATURE THEMES</td>
<td>Social Knowledge &amp; Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 4</td>
<td>RESEARCH ISSUES</td>
<td>1. Despite its significance, little empirical research has been conducted to understand the practice and challenges of event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 5</td>
<td>RESEARCH DISCUSSION TOPICS</td>
<td>Challenges in Event Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Table FF.** Research Matrix presenting Coded Results of Research

**Themes by Data Source**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>Event Management</th>
<th>The Creative Process</th>
<th>Strategic Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 2</td>
<td>PARENT LITERATURES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 4</td>
<td>RESEARCH ISSUES</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 5</td>
<td>RESEARCH DISCUSSION TOPICS</td>
<td>Challenges in Event Management</td>
<td>Characteristics of Creative Process</td>
<td>Influence on Creative Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 6</td>
<td>RESEARCH THEMES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Context</th>
<th>Challenges in Event Management</th>
<th>Characteristics of Creative Process</th>
<th>Influence on Creative Process</th>
<th>Strategic Thinking can complement current operational focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### 9.8 Appendix H – Survey Results from Researched People and Organisations

**Table GG. Survey Questions One to Six**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  What is your gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  What age group are you?</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  What is your highest qualification?</td>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College/University Certification</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate Degree</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Degree (Masters, Doctorate)</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  What is your highest Event Management qualification?</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Industry Course</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry/College/University Certification or Undergraduate Degree</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Degree (Masters, Doctorate)</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  How many years experience do you have in Event Management?</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 or over</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  How many events do you run per year?</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 or over</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=29
Table HH. Survey Question Seven: Rankings of most important values of an Event Professional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>More Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Behaviour</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating your events with other activities</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking strategically</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Creative</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=29