

Staging and Managing Match Events in the English Professional Football Industry: An SME Learning Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The English professional football industry has attracted considerable academic interest in relation to the tragedies which have occurred during the twentieth century. However, the bulk of this work has focused on historical, social and economic factors rather than match processes. Consequently, an in-depth view of the current state of football match event management processes does not exist and this paper aims to address this. To achieve this, the paper examines SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) and event (set against football context) literatures and surfaces the SME mentality of a majority of clubs including the large enterprises. This embedded SME mentality informs an understanding of football match event management practices by developing and applying a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model. The model is then used to demonstrate how clubs can generate, transfer and use knowledge to learn from the mistakes of the past.

Design/methodology/approach: This argument uses an interpretivist methodological approach and produces qualitative primary data from semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation.

Findings: The study develops a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model as a framework that provides an insight into contemporary football event management issues and the key processes involved in staging football matches. In addition the development and application of the model highlights the extent to which football clubs now generate, transfer and use knowledge from experience.

Originality: This paper provides a model which informs the under-developed area of football event management.

Keywords: SME, events management, football-match-event-lifecycle-model, knowledge transfer and learning

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Introduction

The literature relating to stadium management in the English professional football industry in the twentieth century is dominated by accounts of stadium disasters which resulted in the death of more than 270 spectators. (Inglis, 1987; Johnes, 2004; Walker, 2005; Smith and Elliott, 2006). Key stakeholders, governments, governing bodies, supporters and football clubs failed to respond effectively. Due to this and the poor general management practices within football clubs the staging and management of football match events remained unchanged for much of the epoch. This paper links this underdevelopment of match event management processes to the assertion that football clubs, even when large entities, have a Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) mentality. Longstanding failures were underlined by Gratton and Henry (2001: 67) who, investigating the Hillsborough tragedy in the United Kingdom, attributed it to a ‘...a failure in the stadium event system.’ In the face of such concerns it is therefore alarming that research on these two interlinked facets, firstly, the incidence of disasters at United Kingdom grounds and, secondly, the role of football event management in relation to its predominant SME context that match events remain underdeveloped. It is the aim of this paper to enhance football match event management practices by acknowledging football club SME context and learning processes. This facilitates the development of a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model which provides a novel insight for key stakeholders associated with the staging and managing of football matches.

Literature Review

The English Professional Football Industry: An SME Perspective

In recent decades, the commercial and financial basis of the English professional football industry has shifted and the sport has become a vital part of the complex English entertainment and sports industry (Buraimo et al. 2006; Williams, 2006; Kelly, 2008; Moore and Levermore, 2012). In financial terms the transformation is substantial particularly in the light of the predominant SME mindset in the sport. In their Annual Review of Football Finance, Deloitte (2009: 30) observed that:

‘In 1991/92, the last season before the formation of the Premier League, the former Division One clubs had a collective turnover of £170m. By contrast the revenue of the

top 20 Premier League clubs in 2007/08 is projected at over ten times this amount at £1.9billion.'

Indeed, even clubs in the lower divisions became 'multifaceted leisure businesses with a range of income streams' (Matusiewicz, 2000: 166). Consequently, for many, success 'on the pitch' is no longer the sole concern; issues such as survival, liquidity, profitability and revenue maximisation are equally important (Szymanski and Kuypers, 2000; Guillianotti and Richardson, 2004; Milanovic, 2005; Buraimo et al. 2006; Gilmore and Gilson, 2007; Moore and Levermore, 2012). This transformation has resulted in the elite football clubs experiencing unprecedented growth. Many clubs in the Premier League, when measured by the European Commission Small-to-Medium Enterprise definition, have turnovers and employee numbers congruent with large-scale enterprises (EC, 2006; Moore and Levermore, 2012). However, the transformation of a small group of clubs into large scale enterprises has occurred only relatively recently and, as a result, the industry remains (even in major clubs) overwhelmingly dominated by SME management approaches and modes of thinking. These football club business management practices remain ill-suited to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Cannon and Hamil (2000) suggest that the 'amateur tradition' prevails in the boardrooms and the back offices of most clubs and argue that clubs are still run predominantly by non-executive directors with little experience of the issues facing contemporary football. Equally, Banks (2002) indicates that the financial aspects of football exhibit 'amateur practices' resulting in the difficulties experienced. Szymanski and Kuypers (2000) encapsulate the overall sentiment suggesting that many clubs have hardly advanced beyond Victorian business practices. These observations highlight a paradox: the football industry has experienced an unprecedented period of growth and commercial success yet business management practices are regarded by many as being unsophisticated and it is this latter dimension which carries over into the event management of match day.

Staging and Managing Matches in the English Professional Football Industry

The under-development of match events has a potent historical echo. Inglis (1987: 28) explained that 'A century ago clubs did virtually nothing to protect spectators. Thousands were packed onto badly constructed slopes with hardly a wooden barrier in sight' and clubs were persistently reluctant to update their stadia. Financial resources tended to be concentrated on 'on the pitch' activities rather than being invested in facilities. Harrington (1968: 34) comments 'Clubs often seem keener to spend money on the purchase of players

than to undertake any major spending on ground improvement which would increase safety...'. As a consequence, fundamental crowd control measures were not in place and overcrowding was common. Johnes (2004: 137) noted 'The philosophy was to pack in as many spectators as possible: a ground's capacity was simply whatever the previous record was' and '...the decision when to close the gates was often a rather haphazard guess.'

This approach resulted in a series of tragic incidents in the United Kingdom involving fatalities - most notably at the Ibrox Stadium in 1902, 1961, 1967, 1969 and 1971; at Wembley Stadium in 1923; at Burden Park, Bolton in 1946; and Valley Parade, Bradford in 1985 (Inglis, 1987; Johnes, 2004; Walker, 2005; Smith and Elliott, 2006). However, it was the deaths of ninety-six Liverpool supporters in 1989 at the Hillsborough Stadium, Sheffield, and the subsequent Taylor Report, that acted as a catalyst for change and the requirement for all-seated accommodation in the top two divisions resulted in extensive construction projects (Elliott *et al.* 1999).

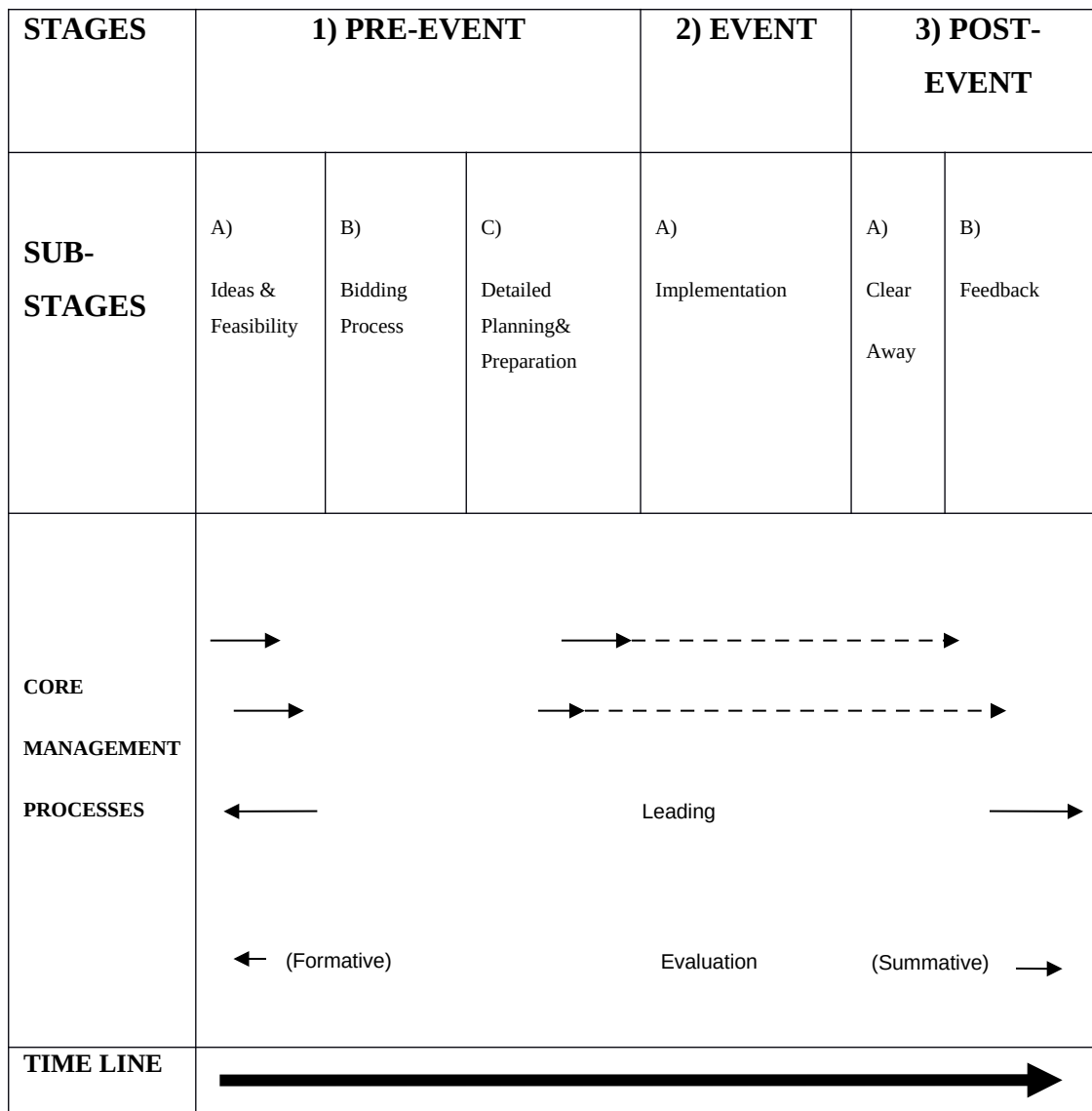
Despite significant evidence of change, Elliott and Smith (1999) advised caution when attempting to assess the extent to which clubs had improved. They explored the staging of football matches in the early post-Taylor period and concluded that '...the football industry in the UK has learnt little from the disasters that occurred during the latter part of the 1980s and beyond.' (p101). Here the inference is that, even with significant investment and comprehensive legislation, English professional football clubs have persisted with inappropriate and underdeveloped event management practices. This is an interesting, if not contentious, comment given that since the Taylor Report the English football industry has not witnessed a disaster on the scale of Hillsborough. Clearly, this could be due to good fortune; however, because a clear picture of the state of football event management practices is absent Elliott and Smith's claim cannot be accurately assessed. The remainder of this paper aims to develop a comprehensive and coherent picture of the state of contemporary events management practices in the industry context.

Sport Event Management

Although sport event management dates back to the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Greece and Rome, progress towards establishing the activity as a fully-fledged management function has been very slow (Elliot and Smith, 1993; Korstanje, 2009). Consequently, the staging and management of events draws upon other, well-established management disciplines such as project management (see Masterman 2004; and Van Der Wagen 2007; Bowdin *et al.* 2010).

Indeed, according to Emery (2003) the field of project management has made the most significant contribution and he emphasises that sport event management ‘...can be clearly viewed as a specialist type of project management, albeit a particularly complex one.’ Emery synthesised his observations into the Life-Cycle Events Model shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Life Cycle Stages and Core Management Processes of Major Sports Events



(Source: Emery, 2003: 279)

Start of Management Activity End of Management Activity
Management Application

Key:

In keeping with mainstream project management models Emery’s approach presents the event management process as a *lifecycle*. Activities are segmented into three discrete phases –

pre-event, event and post-event. He also includes the generic management processes of planning, organizing, leading and evaluation. Clearly, Emery's framework is valuable in describing and analysing the life-cycle through which a 'one off' sports event progresses over time. However, in the context of staging a football match the model has components that are of little or no relevance. For instance, a football match would not include the 'ideas and feasibility' and the 'bidding process' elements. A further weakness is that the framework does not capture the importance of feedback in informing all phases of the next match. Similarly, the framework does not adequately accommodate the notion that a football match is both a single event and one of a series of very similar events for which standard procedures and processes can be put in place. In order to address these gaps the argument develops data and observations which build on and modify Emery's framework in order to produce a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model. Building on Emery's model in this way, it is possible to suggest that the pre-event, event and post-event stages reflect the pre-match, match day, post-match phases and offer a literature critique of football match events as an instance of SME learning.

Phase One: Pre-Match

The primary management activities undertaken in this phase are planning and organizing. The importance of these functions is highlighted by Van Der Wagen (2007: 181), who comments that '...planning and organization are the key elements that determine the success of an event.' Planning is regarded as the foundation of successful events management and is seen as a pervasive activity that influences all aspects of the events management process (Emery, 2003; Tum *et al.* 2006 ; Van Der Wagen, 2007). Organizing is the activity that structures and coordinates effort. It is indivisibly linked to planning and is essential if plans are to be implemented (Watt, 1992; Westerbeek, 2005; Torkildsen, 2010).

Phase Two: Match Day

This is the implementation phase. Here the focus is on monitoring and controlling the plans and organizational activity undertaken in the pre-match stage. Controlling is vital to successful events management because it '...keeps plans in line' (Tum *et al.* 2006). Monitoring '...is the process of tracking an event through the various stages of implementation' (Bowdin *et al.* 2010). An important aspect during this phase is the evaluation of the progress of different elements of the event in order to make corrections if objectives unlikely to be met (Westerbeek , 2005: 36).

Phase Three: Post-Match

This phase begins when the stadium is empty and initial clear up activities have ceased. The primary focus here is effective evaluation. Although Figure 2 shows that evaluation occurs at intervals throughout the process it is during this phase that formative and process evaluation are synthesised with summative evaluation to generate feedback. This is then used to inform the staging of future events. According to Tum *et al.* (2006: 239) 'Evaluation gives event organizers the opportunity to look back on what has happened during the event, correct all that may not have gone as planned and build on what went right.' Meaningful evaluation is dependent upon feedback gathered from stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the event (Masterman, 2004: 83).

In summary, given the absence of an extensive evaluation of the event management practices involved in staging and managing contemporary football matches, project and event management literature have provided insights. The discussion now turns to the methodology employed to secure primary data gathered from semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. These data in conjunction with literature facilitate the development of a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopted an interpretivistic approach that utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. Interview data were gathered from three senior key informants working in the English professional football industry (two Stadium Managers and a Local Authority Licensing Official). The sample was small because of the difficulty of gaining access to the English professional football industry. This is due to the celebrity aspect of contemporary professional football and the fact that clubs struggle to deal with the large volume of requests they get for cooperation. Clearly, the study's limited sample size has implications for the generalizability of findings. As a result, the aim here is to provide a study that develops focused insights from in-depth qualitative data.

Interviewing began in July 2007 and ended in June 2009. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Transcripts were returned to interviewees for approval. A semi-structured interview approach was adopted because it enabled contributors to 'tell their own story', thereby enabling the interviewer to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the

participants' 'world' (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Barbour and Schostak, 2005; Polonsky and Waller, 2010; Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2008; Gray, 2009).

Non-participant observation took place in two English Championship football clubs: Club A and Club B. Observations conducted at Club A were repeated annually over a three year period. On each visit access was given to the key business functions of the club and as a result a comprehensive understanding of how the organization operated was developed. At Club B, the researcher was able to shadow the Stadium Manager on a match day for a six-hour period. This allowed the researcher to observe how a practitioner operated in a 'real' world situation.

The interview transcripts and observation notes were analysed through intensive reading and rereading in order to allow prevalent themes, issues and phraseology to crystallise. This process, combined with the overall approach to the research, acknowledged and embraced issues of reflexivity - recognising the relation and impact of the researcher on the researched and vice-versa.

Results & Discussion

In this section the adapted key elements of pre-match, match-day and post-match are used to organize and evaluate the data.

Phase One: Pre-Match

Planning

Interviewee A (2007), a Stadium Manager at a Championship club, indicated that pre-match planning was an important activity. He explained that several planning meetings take place in the week prior to a match and commented that:

'The police ask "What particular unique occurrences are happening at this game, as far as the club is concerned?" and I brief them. On occasions, you may get supporters from neighbouring clubs who may want to try and converge around the ground...it's quite vital really for us to know what likely problems may occur... and that meeting covers all that.'

In addition, interviewee A outlined the planning that takes place two days prior to a match. At this time he conducts a 'Preview Meeting' which involves bringing together the commercial

and catering departments, the club's security company and club's Press Officer to '....prepare everybody for what they might expect and it has the effect of raising the 'ante' a little bit – to get the adrenalin running a little bit better – it is a good way to prepare.' The focus is upon briefing the key departments, and staff, within the club in order to guard against complacency and to ensure that all parties are prepared. Interviewee B (2009), a Local Authority Licensing Officer, agreed with the point that a preview meeting was crucial to the planning process. He also mentioned the need to engage in contingency planning. He said 'Clubs have contingency plans, they have a format for dealing with potential problems, for example power cuts etc.' Interviewee A (2007) also explained that contingency planning was important. He related that the club ensures that appropriately trained employees are available to cover key roles, such as the Safety Officer, in the event of staff absence. While such planning was in evidence there was still a sense that the predominant sense-making and nature of discussions were by a 'matey', 'laddish' and familiar (male-dominated and testosterone charged) atmosphere. In this way, the relatively small and localized community of co-workers reflected and operated a typical SME context.

Organizing

Interviewee A (2007) and interviewee C (2007), a Stadium Manager of a Premier League club, both explained that organizing resources was an essential, time consuming and challenging activity. Interviewee A (2007) described the broad range of his organizational activities. He explained that he had to organize stadium maintenance which involved repairing broken items, such as seating and toilets, and cleaning and tidying the stadium. He also outlined how he has to brief match day stewards. He said:

'I brief the Steward Supervisors, who in turn cascade information to their teams. We have 250 or so stewards so it is quite a big operation. I meet the Supervisors at 12.40pm when we have a 3 o'clock kick off. I tell them what I have learned from the police and I outline any potential issues that they may need to be aware of.'

The range of interviewee A's responsibilities was further demonstrated when he explained how he was responsible for organizing the safe passage of players to and from the car park. He said 'The protection of players has become an issue over the last couple of games. I have had to change where they park and organize bringing them in through a new gate.'

Interviewee C (2007) explained the unique organizational challenges posed by his operating environment. He commented:

‘We are forever working to deadlines. If we slip by a week – we don’t open the stadium and it gets noticed! The problem with football is that quite often how you start is how you carry on all the way through.’

The respondent data in relation to organizing reflected the geographically localized and centric nature of a match event taking place on a specific day in a specific and precise well-known and familiar place. This might be contrasted with, for example, a major corporation having global span and scope. A football club and its match events occur in an extremely small localized setting and in this way, again, reflect the sense of an SME context.

Phase Two: Match Day

Controlling

Interviewee A (2007) offered a useful insight into control issues. He said

‘Since Hillsborough, the responsibility for safety in a football ground is that of the club. The police work in partnership to support the club, but the only time that they will take decisions is if an incident occurs inside the ground and they believe that they need to take full control...a note will be made on the log and control will be handed over.’

The log is a ‘live’ document in which key incidents are recorded. It is created during the pre-match phase and then updated during the match and post-match phases. The details are used to construct post-match reports and are available in the event of litigation and other legal proceedings.

During the match interviewee A is located in the Control Room. He explained that, aided by technology (i.e. CCTV, radio communication etc), he ‘...runs match day from this room...’ For instance, from this location he can communicate directly with all stewards and he can control the flow of spectators into the stadium. He explained that ‘There are all sorts of things impacting upon safety now, and a lot of it is about getting greater control of spectators.’ He outlined how the club had recently replaced their turnstiles with a ‘smart card’ system and he explained how this facilitates the control of spectators in a variety of ways. Firstly, in terms

of flow, if parts of the stadium are reaching capacity the system warns the Control Room so that entrances can be closed. He said:

‘I can look at the Main Stand and know precisely how many people have come in at any time. For instance, if we did have a forged ticket problem, it might not be apparent until all of a sudden that screen was flashing at me – it starts to flash at 90 per cent and then becomes more intense if it’s getting up to 97 or 98 per cent. I would look outside using the CCTV and if there were massive queues I would say to the operator “Shut the entrance, there’s something wrong.’

Monitoring

Interviewee A (2007) gave a comprehensive outline of the various ways in which he monitors the match. For instance, he explained how CCTV systems were used to monitor spectators as they approached the stadium. He said:

‘You can literally watch away fans on their journey up the motorway, into the city and on to the Stadium. When the police helicopter is up it has a direct link that streams images into this Control Room...if for instance supporters are delayed this may present a safety risk ...by monitoring what’s happening we could consider delaying the kick-off.’

Controlling and monitoring provide a pan-optical (all seeing) perspective on the match event management. The pan-opticon reinforces a sense of the localized and the familiar in the match day experience making the football ground and its activities seem like a quickly explored and covered SME site.

Phase Three: Post-Match

Evaluation and Feedback

Interviewee A (2007) highlighted the importance of evaluation and indicated that he evaluated operations throughout the lifecycle. For example, he explained that in a corner of the stadium a hotel was under construction. Before each match the progress of the development, and its impact on match day operations, had to be evaluated. He commented:

‘The development of the hotel and the footprint of where they’re operating alters match by match. Everybody needs to know how the project is developing – for

instance it may be that it is going to affect the exit routes for the emergency vehicles...Things alter match by match.'

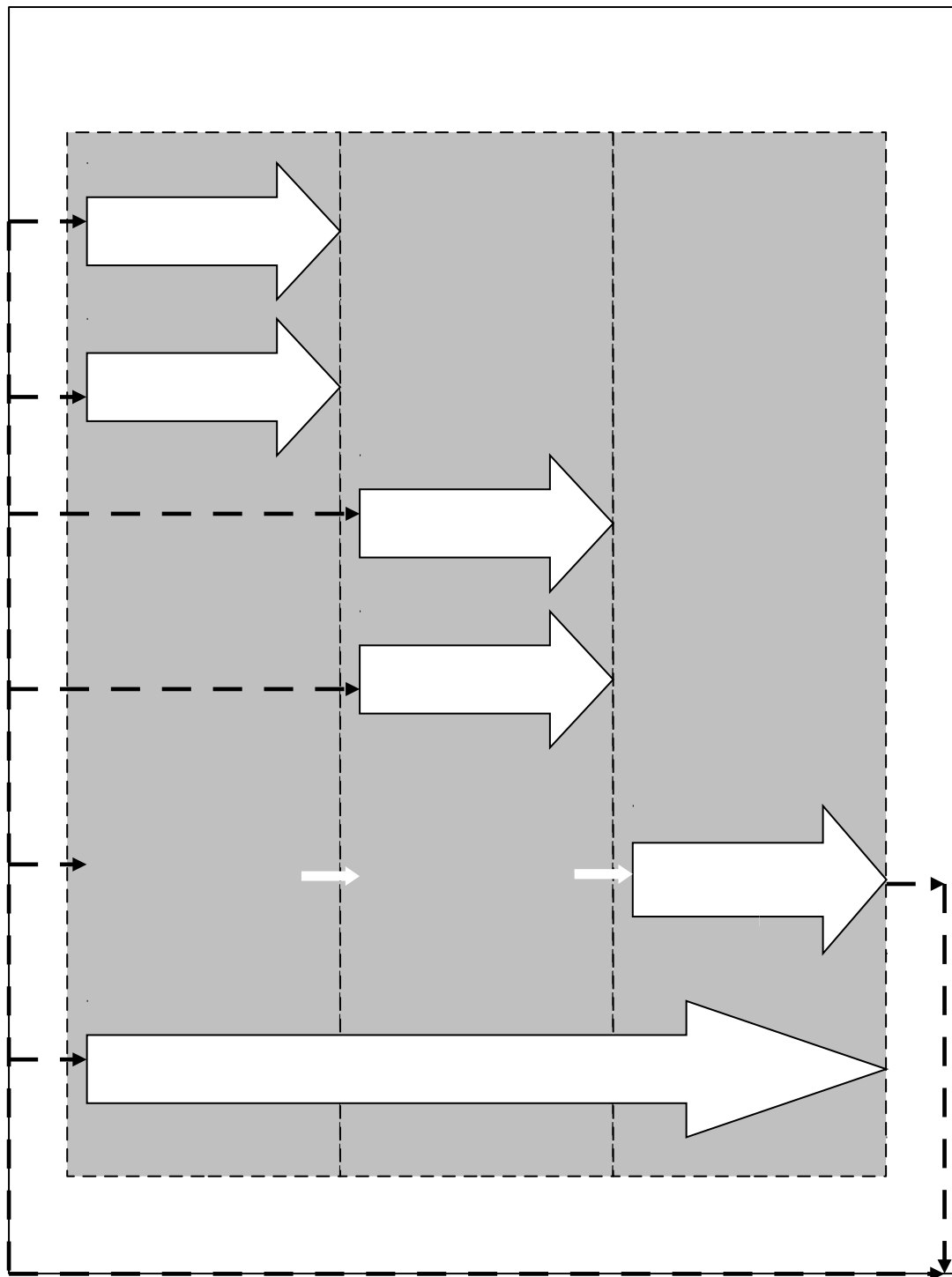
In the post-match phase Interviewee A explained how summative evaluation is used. He said:

'At the end of the game...the stewards will comb every aisle. The Steward Supervisors have a de-brief sheet to report any damage, any problems, and any issues. I get that sheet within 24 hours. I use the sheets to brief our maintenance team to ensure that things are repaired pretty quickly for the next game.'

These accounts indicate that interviewee A uses formative, process and summative evaluation to generate feedback which is used to inform future practices and procedures.

In summary, evaluation and feedback are essential elements for a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model. The literature insights combined with the information gleaned from the primary data enable the construction of such a model which is outlined below. The model shows how formative, process and summative evaluations are used to generate feedback, which in turn is then used to inform each phase of the event process. This highlights how clubs have become more flexible and responsive in their approach to staging matches. Moreover, commitment to generating and considering evaluation and feedback suggests that clubs are prepared to engage with their stakeholders and consider the implementation of new initiatives.

Figure 2: The Football Match Event Lifecycle Model



This adapted and evolved model synthesizes the components involved in staging and managing a football match. It is valuable on two counts. Firstly, it shows the interrelationship between the management functions of pre-match, match and post-match operations. Secondly, the model continues the depiction of a lifecycle. This emphasises that football matches are repeat events which provide clubs with an opportunity to refine and develop their

event management operations based on evaluation and feedback. In the following sections the model is analysed and each phase is discussed in detail.

When considered holistically the Football Match Event Lifecycle Model is useful in evaluating pre-match, match and post-match event management activities and associated issues. In particular, the model provides a framework that reflects, incorporates and facilitates the systematic evaluation of the key areas of event planning, organizing, controlling, monitoring evaluation, feedback. In addition, returning Elliott and Smith's (1999: 101) assertion that English football clubs had 'learnt little from the disasters that occurred during the latter part of the 1980s and beyond' the development of the model contributes to understanding of organizational learning by providing a valuable insight into how football clubs generate, transfer and use knowledge. Nevertheless, this is an iterative process and it is important to remain mindful of the SME mindset in which a majority of English professional football clubs operate. This does not automatically imply that a learning attitude, rather than a habitual mode of behavior, will be in operation. It is to the exploration of the possibility of a learning SME in the football match event that the argument now turns in the final sections of the paper.

Staging football matches: the generation, transference and use of knowledge

Traditionally, British SMEs have been criticized for their inability and reluctance to generate, transfer and use knowledge (Carter, 2006; Wilson and Thompson, 2006; Guerriero Wilson 2012). Introversion, risk aversion, a preference for 'tried and tested' methods and suspicion of outside influences have been cited as barriers to the generation, transference and use of knowledge. These criticisms have also been leveled at the football industry - in particular the approach that clubs have traditionally adopted when staging football matches. Nevertheless, the data gathered for this study indicate that progress may be possible and occurring in some ways.

Generation of knowledge

Knowledge is generated from a range of internal and external sources. This was emphasised by interviewee B (2009) when he explained that clubs are able to build up a repository of knowledge by collating the reports that they receive from the key parties involved in staging the match. He said '...the match day file is very thick' and he related that:

‘The reports cover everything. They include what the weather was like, how many ejections took place etc. Games may be uneventful, but there may be something that needs to be passed on for the future. For example, the police do a report for every game – the club can look back over two or three years. Clubs can use all of this feedback’

This account provides a valuable insight because, it further emphasises the importance of on-going evaluation and feedback. It clearly, shows how clubs can accumulate knowledge and then use it to inform the staging of future matches. The account is also useful because it indicates that clubs store the knowledge that they generate in the form of written reports. Indications are that these reports are collated into files which are used as reference documents for future events.

Transference of knowledge

Knowledge transfer was evidenced in a number of ways. Firstly, as the Football Match Event Lifecycle Model indicates, within clubs knowledge is passed on in meetings and through written documents (interviewee A (2007) and interviewee B (2009)). Secondly, clubs share knowledge and experience with each other via membership of the Safety Officers Association. Interviewee C (2007) explained the aim and structure of the association, he said:

‘The aim was to share and spread best practice. At that inaugural meeting eighteen people, out of a possible 92 turned up – but from there the Association has gone from strength to strength. We now have about 250-260 members. Through the Association we meet twice a year nationally, we meet quarterly in regions.’

Interviewee B (2009) also emphasised the role of the Safety Officers Association in enabling clubs to share knowledge with each other. He mentioned that the Association’s website was a particularly valuable tool. He said

‘Members are able to discuss things on the website. They tend to post things about certain games. It might just be their own feelings about games and about visiting fans. The idea is that others can look at these posts and be aware of issues and see if there are any patterns emerging with certain fans.’

Thirdly, knowledge is transferred amongst the key stakeholders involved in the staging of a match through Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meetings. Both interviewee A (2007) and

interviewee C (2007) explained that under the terms of a club's safety certificate each club has to attend meetings of their local SAG. Indeed failure to attend can result in the safety certificate being revoked; an action which would prevent a club from opening its stadium to spectators. SAGs comprise of representatives from the police, fire and ambulance services, local authority departments (i.e. building control, the licensing section and environmental health) and the Football Licensing Authority. Interviewee A (2007) explained

‘All of those disciplines oversee the activities of the football club. So, for instance, if there's new legislation we have meetings to plan and discuss the club's response. We also have table top exercises to make sure that we're fully updated. We go away for two or three days to consider different scenarios.’

Clearly, this indicates that clubs actively engage in knowledge transfer activities. Knowledge circulates within clubs, between clubs and amongst the primary stakeholders involved in the staging of football matches.

Use of knowledge

Primarily, knowledge is used to inform current and future practice. For instance, as discussed earlier the knowledge gathered from evaluation and feedback enables clubs to adapt and modify their operations. Such action further indicates the extent to which clubs are engaged in organisational learning. Interviewee A (2007) demonstrated this when he explained how data gathered from his club's smart card system was used to modify match day operations. He said:

‘The card enables us to monitor when a spectator enters the ground. If we find that too many spectators are arriving at the ground ten minutes before kickoff we can introduce promotions for the next game, such as offering them a free pie with a pint if they enter an hour before kickoff.’

Interviewee C (2007) outlined how accumulated knowledge had been used effectively in the industry. He explained that members of the Safety Officers Association had collaborated to develop a qualification. He said, ‘We've now put together our own training course so there is now actually a qualification which leads to an NVQ Level Two Spectator Control.’ Interviewee A (2007) corroborated interviewee C's (2007) point and explained the importance of the qualification. He said:

‘All our stewards undergo at least Level Two NVQ training in the national stewarding qualification. As part of the training they look at areas such conflict management and searching and ejecting. There’s quite a comprehensive training regime that underpins our match day operation.’

In summary, this section has highlighted that there is evidence that the football clubs in the sample have made significant advances in terms of their ability to generate, transfer and use knowledge. This is an interesting development because it indicates that the clubs are prepared to learn from the past and engage in ongoing learning and development. This moves clubs on from the post-professionalisation and proto-commercialisation phases when many clubs were suspicious and sceptical of outside influences, closed-minded and reluctant to change. The evidence presented above indicates that in the area of match day related operations clubs have the capacity to change and have engaged in organisational learning and development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, unlike much of the football related events management literature this paper does not focus primarily upon the tragedies and disasters that occurred at football matches in Britain in the twentieth century. Rather its aim has been to surface the SME context and to develop a clearer understanding of contemporary regular event football match event management practices. This has been achieved by drawing upon project and event management literature to develop a Football Match Event Lifecycle Model. Application of the model has illustrated its usefulness in evaluating pre-match, match and post-match event management activities and associated issues. In particular, the model provides a framework that facilitates the systematic evaluation of the key areas of event planning, organizing, controlling, monitoring evaluation and leadership. In addition the development and application of the model has surfaced that clubs have become more effective at generating, transferring and using learning knowledge.

Initial results suggest that there is congruence between the way that the football clubs stage their matches and the advice and guidance emanating from contemporary event management literature. Given the preliminary scope of the primary data considered in this study (i.e. a relatively small number of interviewees and observations of event management practices at two football clubs) this is an interesting initial finding and suggests that the model should be developed further by applying it to a broader range of football clubs. Indeed it is anticipated that the next phase of the evolution of the model will involve a more extensive study which

encompasses a larger number of football clubs and also an assessment of the model's suitability for application in other event management contexts.

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