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Adaptive Event Management Capability: The Framework for Event Organizers' Operational Resilience in a Dynamic Tourism Environment

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Abstract

The event organizer industry is part of the tourism service sector, which has project-based operational characteristics with a high degree of variability. Unlike the recurring service sector, events take place within a limited time frame, involve many parties, and are influenced by unpredictable environmental conditions. These conditions mean that a static, planning-based operational management approach cannot always guarantee the stability of event implementation. This study aims to develop a conceptual framework of Adaptive Event Management Capability as a model of operational resilience for event organizer organizations. The study uses a conceptual approach through the integration of dynamic capability theory, organizational resilience, and service management. The analysis was conducted through a literature synthesis to construct a theoretical framework of adaptive capabilities in project-based service organizations. The results of the study indicate that the operational resilience of event organizations is shaped by four key capabilities, namely anticipatory capability, responsive capability, transformative capability, and sustainable stabilization capability. These four capabilities form an operational learning cycle that determines the consistency of organizational performance. These findings confirm that the success of activities is determined not only by the quality of planning but also by the organization's ability to interpret and adjust its actions to changing situations. This research contributes to the development of tourism service management studies by positioning the stability of operational processes as a key factor in the performance of project-based organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The modern tourism industry is evolving toward an experience economy in which the main value no longer derives solely from tourist attractions but from integrated experiences. Events have become one of the primary instruments for building these experiences because they combine social interaction, atmosphere, and structured activities within a specific time frame (De Geus et al. 2016; Marques et al. 2021; Simons 2019).

Event organizers act as managers of temporary experiences. These organizations integrate human resources, technology, vendors, locations, and activity flows into a sequence of activities that must operate according to a predetermined schedule. Unlike the manufacturing sector, events do not produce physical products that can be tested before being delivered to consumers. The quality of an event can only be assessed while it is taking place (Armbrecht 2020; Brown et al. 2015; Vahdati et al. 2021).

These characteristics result in a high level of operational risk. Small changes can have major consequences for the entire activity. For example, changes in the program schedule can affect technical arrangements, equipment requirements, and the duration of the activity (Shinn et al. 2015). Weather conditions can affect the safety, comfort, and experience of participants.

Even external factors such as government policy can suddenly change the format of an activity.

The global pandemic has provided a clear illustration of the vulnerability of the events industry. Many organizations were unable to maintain operations because their working models were overly dependent on stable conditions. In contrast, organizations that were able to switch to virtual or hybrid working methods were able to continue operating. This demonstrates that adaptability is more important for organizational sustainability than the quality of planning alone (Liu et al. 2019; Saemaldaher et al. 2025; de Souza et al. 2017).

Previous research in service management has predominantly assessed organizational performance based on customer satisfaction and service quality. The SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) has become the dominant framework for measuring service quality by comparing customer expectations with perceived performance. While this approach has proven effective for routine services with relatively stable processes, it does not fully explain how organizations maintain operational stability in the highly variable and project-based event industry (Bygballe et al. 2021; John 2019; Lopes et al. 2025). Zeithaml et al. (2020) further expanded service management theory by emphasizing customer focus across the firm, yet the internal mechanisms for maintaining service stability under changing conditions remain underexplored.

Organizational resilience theory offers valuable insights into how systems function under disruption. Hollnagel (2015) introduced the concept of Safety-II, which emphasizes the ability to succeed under varying conditions rather than merely avoiding failure. Bhamra et al. (2011) provided a comprehensive literature review on resilience, highlighting its application across various industries. However, most resilience studies have focused on high-risk industries such as aviation, healthcare, and manufacturing, with limited application to project-based service organizations like event organizers. Similarly, dynamic capability theory, pioneered by Teece et al. (1997) and further developed by Teece (2018), explains how organizations adapt their resources to environmental changes. Nevertheless, dynamic capability has primarily been applied to manufacturing and technology companies facing strategic market changes on an annual or multi-year scale, rather than to organizations that must adapt on an hourly or minute-by-minute basis during service delivery.

Getz (2012) provided foundational knowledge in event studies, covering the theory, research, and policy of planned events. Sigala (2020) examined the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and events, highlighting the need for industry resetting and adaptation. Armstrong (2018) offered evidence-based guidance on performance management. However, these studies have not specifically addressed how event organizers develop internal capabilities to maintain operational stability in the face of real-time disruptions during events. The intersection of service management, organizational resilience, and dynamic capability in the context of project-based event organizations remains a significant research gap (Barbosa et al. 2023; Bentahar et al. 2024; Patrício et al. 2021).

Despite the growing recognition that adaptability is crucial for organizational sustainability, there is currently no comprehensive framework explaining how event organizers build and maintain operational resilience through adaptive capabilities. Existing models tend to focus either on service outcomes (customer satisfaction) or on strategic adaptation (market-level changes), leaving a gap in understanding the micro-operational level of adaptation that occurs during service delivery. The event industry's unique characteristics—temporary,

experience-based, real-time, and highly variable—require a specialized framework that integrates insights from multiple theoretical perspectives.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of the Adaptive Event Management Capability (AEMC) framework, which integrates dynamic capability theory, organizational resilience, and service management into a cohesive model specifically designed for project-based event organizations. Unlike previous frameworks that focus on static planning or strategic-level adaptation, AEMC addresses the operational-level adaptability required during event delivery. This research proposes that operational resilience in event organizations is shaped by four key capabilities: anticipatory capability, responsive capability, transformative capability, and sustainable capability. These four capabilities form an operational learning cycle that determines organizational performance stability. By positioning adaptation as the connecting mechanism between operational processes and service outcomes, this framework extends the application of dynamic capability from the strategic organizational level to the micro-operational activity level.

This study aims to develop a conceptual framework of Adaptive Event Management Capability as a model of operational resilience for event organizer organizations, specifically to identify the key capabilities that determine operational stability in event organizations, explain how these capabilities interact within an operational adaptation cycle, and demonstrate how adaptive capability connects operational processes to service outcomes. The benefits of this research are threefold. For theoretical development, it contributes to the expansion of service management and dynamic capability studies in the context of project-based services. For practical application, the framework helps event organizations build more stable work systems in a dynamic tourism environment. For industry development, it provides a foundation for training programs and standard operating procedures that enhance organizational resilience. By developing this framework, the research addresses the urgent need for event organizers to move beyond planning-based approaches and develop the adaptive capabilities necessary to thrive in an increasingly uncertain operating environment.

METHOD

This study used a conceptual qualitative approach. This approach did not aim to test relationships between variables statistically but rather to construct a theoretical framework of understanding through the integration of relevant literature.

A conceptual approach was chosen because the phenomenon under study was related to the complex and dynamic operational characteristics of the industry, which did not yet have an established model. Thus, the research focused on model development rather than model testing.

This research was a conceptual model development study. The model was constructed through a comparative analysis of various concepts relevant to the event organizer industry, namely service management, operations management, organizational resilience, and dynamic capability

The study did not use respondent data but instead applied a theoretical synthesis approach.

The research data consisted of secondary data obtained through literature studies from service and operations management textbooks, international risk management standards, organizational resilience journals, dynamic capability literature, and event and tourism industry studies. The literature was selected based on the relevance of the concepts to the characteristics

of events, which are temporary, complex, and experience-based.

The analysis was conducted in three stages:

1) Concept Reduction: Identifying common principles across various theories from different fields.
2) Capability Categorization: Grouping organizational capabilities based on operational functions.
3) Model Synthesis: Developing an adaptive capability framework appropriate to the context of event organizers. The analysis process resulted in an adaptive capability model for event organizations, conceptualized as the Adaptive Event Management Capability (AEMC) framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Adaptive Event Management Capability

Based on the integration of organizational resilience theory and dynamic capability, four key capabilities were identified that determine the operational stability of event organizers.

This model is called Adaptive Event Management Capability (AEMC). AEMC is the ability of an organization to maintain operational performance by continuously adjusting work processes to changes in the environment.

The Model Consists Of Four Capabilities:

1. Anticipatory Capability
2. Responsive Capability
3. Transformative Capability
4. Sustainable Capability

The four form a cycle of operational adaptation.

Anticipatory Capability

Anticipatory capability is an organization's ability to read potential changes before activities take place. This ability is not just about making plans, but understanding possible variations in situations.

In the event industry, planning is not enough to simply set an activity schedule. Organizations need to develop alternative operational scenarios.

Examples of implementation:

a. alternative participant flow planning
b. weather change scenarios
c. alternative event schedules
d. vendor backups
e. spatial flexibility

Organizations with anticipatory capabilities not only have plans A and B, but understand when to use them. This capability determines the initial readiness of the work system.

Responsive Capability

Responsive capability is the ability to respond to disruptions during activities without interrupting the main activities.

In events, disruptions are inevitable. Therefore, the performance indicator is not the absence of disruptions, but the smooth handling of disruptions.

Responsiveness is determined by:

a. team communication
b. decision-making authority
c. field coordination
d. crew experience

Highly responsive organizations are able to keep participants unaware of operational disruptions. In other words, service quality appears stable even when the system undergoes internal changes.

Transformative Capability

Transformative capability is an organization's ability to change its working methods based on operational experience.

The events industry has undergone significant changes due to digital technology and changes in patterns of social interaction. Transformation is not only in the use of technology, but also in changes to work processes.

Examples of transformation:

a. Manual registration becomes digital
b. Face-to-face meetings become online coordination
c. Physical events become hybrid
d. Use of participant management systems

Transformation enables organizations to improve both efficiency and flexibility. Organizations that lack the ability to transform tend to repeat old working methods even when conditions have changed.

Sustainable Capability

Sustainable capability is the ability to maintain long-term performance stability. This capability is related to organizational learning. Every activity becomes a source of improvement for work procedures.

Implementation includes:

a. post-activity evaluation
b. SOP updates
c. team knowledge management
d. efficient use of resources

Sustainability ensures that the organization does not return to its initial state after the activity is complete.

Siklus Adaptasi Operasional

The four capabilities do not stand alone, but form a cycle:

Anticipation → Response → Transformation → Sustainability → Back to Anticipation

This cycle explains that the performance of an event organizer is not the result of a single activity, but the accumulation of operational learning. Organizations that consistently implement the adaptation cycle will have higher performance stability.

Implications for Organizational Performance

The AEMC model shows that the performance of event organizations is influenced by process capabilities, not just activity outcomes.

Performance is no longer understood as the success of a single event, but as the ability to maintain quality under various activity conditions.

Organizations with high adaptive capabilities have the following characteristics:

a. fewer operational errors
b. faster coordination
c. more stable client satisfaction
d. increased cost efficiency

Discussion

The Position of Models in Service Management Studies

Service management studies generally place service quality as the main factor in organizational success. The SERVQUAL model explains that customer satisfaction is influenced by the alignment between expectations and perceptions of service. This approach is effective for routine services with relatively stable processes.

However, in the event organizer industry, service quality is not entirely determined by predetermined service standards. Services are assessed in constantly changing operational conditions. Participants do not only assess the friendliness of staff or the completeness of facilities, but also evaluate the smoothness of the overall experience.

In such situations, service quality becomes the result of an organization's ability to manage change, not just its ability to execute procedures. Therefore, the service quality approach needs to be complemented by an operational capability approach.

The Adaptive Event Management Capability model broadens the understanding of service management from an outcome orientation to an adaptive process orientation. Services are no longer understood as products that are delivered, but as processes whose stability must be maintained.

Relationship with Organizational Resilience

The concept of organizational resilience emphasizes that work systems cannot be completely free from disruption. A secure system is one that is able to function when disruption occurs.

In high-risk industries such as aviation or healthcare, resilience is achieved through monitoring and rapid response capabilities. The events industry has similar characteristics because activities take place in real time and cannot be stopped.

The AEMC model places organizational resilience at the core of operational performance. Activities are considered successful when they continue to run according to plan despite changes in conditions.

Thus, the success of an event is not measured by the absence of problems, but by the uninterrupted experience of participants.

Relationship with Dynamic Capability

Dynamic capability describes an organization's ability to adapt its resources to changes in the environment. In many studies, this concept has been applied to manufacturing and technology companies experiencing market changes.

The event industry demonstrates a different form of dynamic capability. Changes do not occur on an annual or strategic scale, but on an hourly or even minute-by-minute scale during the event.

Therefore, dynamic capability in events is directly operational, not just strategic. Organizations not only respond to changes in the business environment, but also respond to changes in event conditions.

The AEMC model shows that dynamic capability can occur at the micro operational level. This extends the application of the concept from the organizational level to the activity level.

Integration of the Three Perspectives

The three perspectives can be integrated as follows:

a. Service management explains the value of customer experience
b. Organizational resilience explains operational stability
c. Dynamic capability explains the ability to change

Adaptive Event Management Capability is the third point of convergence. This model places adaptation as the connecting mechanism between operational processes and service outcomes.

Thus, the performance of project-based service organizations is understood as a function of adaptive capability, not just service quality or procedural efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The event organizer industry operates in an unstable, experience-based environment where traditional management approaches focused primarily on planning are insufficient to explain operational success. This study formulated the Adaptive Event Management Capability (AEMC) framework as an adaptive organizational capability model consisting of four key capabilities—anticipatory capability, responsive capability, transformative capability, and sustainable capability—which together form an operational adaptation cycle that determines performance stability in event organizations. The findings suggest that the success of an event is influenced not only by execution quality but also by an organization's ability to continuously adapt its operational processes to changing circumstances. The AEMC framework contributes theoretically by extending service management and dynamic capability research into the context of project-based services, demonstrating that dynamic capability can operate at the micro-operational level during service delivery rather than solely at the strategic level. Practically, the framework provides event organizers with a structured perspective for building operational resilience through continuous adaptation and indicates that performance stability depends more on adaptive capability than on service quality or procedural efficiency alone. Future research should empirically test and validate the AEMC framework across different types of event organizations using large-scale quantitative and longitudinal studies to better understand the evolution of operational adaptation cycles and to strengthen the generalizability of the model.

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