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Assessing the Territorial Embeddedness of Events in Tourism Destinations: A Transparent Criteria-Based Scoring Model

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Abstract: The fact that an international event is held in a particular city does not mean that the event is durably attached to that place. This paper develops a transparent model for assessing the territorial embeddedness of an event, defined as the extent to which its content, control, recurrence and public identity are bound to a host destination, and specifies how the resulting composite score should and should not be interpreted. Building on research in event tourism, event portfolio management and economic geography, four criteria are proposed: dependence on local resources, local governance and brand rights, recurrence at the destination, and place identification. Each criterion is scored 0, 0.5 or 1, with a separate "unknown" state, and the scores are combined by an equal-weight arithmetic mean. The scoring rules were tested on four stylised profiles and on official documentary evidence for two events hosted in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The stylised profiles produced composite scores of 0.875, 0.500, 0.500 and 0.250. The two profiles scoring 0.500 had entirely different structures, and their relative ranking depended wholly on the weights, reversing in 49.8% of 100,000 random weight draws. Recording a missing criterion as zero pushed the score to the lower bound of its admissible interval (0.625–0.875 in the test case). The criterion profile, the evidence behind each score and the interval bounds should therefore be reported alongside the composite. The model is a planning instrument rather than a measure of economic impact, and its inter-rater reliability must be established before operational use.

Keywords: Event tourism; territorial embeddedness; event portfolio; composite indicator; brand rights; inter-rater reliability; Samarkand.

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1. Introduction

A destination may bid to host a rotating international congress, or it may nurture a recurring local festival. Both require the management of visitor flows, accommodation and public services, yet the conditions under which they are governed differ fundamentally. The venue of the next congress may be chosen by an international organisation and move elsewhere after a single edition, whereas the continuation of a recurring festival depends on a local programme, local organisers and local resources. The scale of an event and its attachment to a place are therefore distinct properties, and they should be assessed separately.

The distinction also has economic content. An event that is anchored in a destination accumulates returns there: its brand equity, organisational know-how and supplier networks remain local, and each edition can build on the last. A footloose event, by contrast, usually has to be won through competitive bidding, its specifications are set by the rights holder, and the host's investment may yield few cumulative returns once the event moves on [1], [2]. For a destination that manages its events as a portfolio, knowing

which events are anchored and which are transient is therefore a precondition for allocating support and designing leverage strategies [3].

Event tourism research has classified events chiefly by scale and type. Getz [1] traces the evolution of event tourism as a field of study and, in his portfolio approach, distinguishes occasional mega-events, periodic hallmark events, and regional and local events. Ritchie [4] defined hallmark events as one-time or recurring events of limited duration that are developed to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a destination and that derive their success from uniqueness, status or timely significance. Müller [2] operationalises the size of mega-events through visitor attractiveness, mediated reach, cost and urban transformation, and Getz and Page [5] review three decades of research on the planning, impacts and policy of event tourism. These approaches explain how large or how visible an event is; they are less explicit about whether a given event is bound to a particular place and could not easily be moved.

Research on event portfolios brings this question closer to destination planning. Ziakas [3] defines an event portfolio as the strategic patterning of disparate but interrelated events in a host community, intended to achieve multiple outcomes through joint strategies. Subsequent work treats portfolios as social systems assembled through the networks that connect stakeholders with the community [6]. It follows that portfolio selection cannot rest on attendance figures alone: planners also need to know how each event is linked to local culture, seasonality, organisers and audiences.

Economic geography offers a vocabulary for such linkages. Hess [7] distinguishes societal, network and territorial embeddedness, the last describing the degree to which actors are anchored in particular places. Applied to festivals, van Aalst and van Melik [8] ask whether place matters and show that the bond between a festival and its host city varies, with some festivals proving footloose. Richards [9] argues that events contribute to placemaking, rather than merely to place branding, when they mobilise local resources, meanings and actors.

The issue has practical urgency in Uzbekistan. Within about fourteen months, Samarkand hosted the thirteenth edition of the Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival, first held in 1997 [10], and the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference, described as the largest international forum held outside the Organization's headquarters for the first time in 40 years [11]. Official announcements of this kind document that an event took place in the city and, in some cases, how often it has done so. The appearance of the city's name in a press release, however, does not by itself establish who owns the event brand or whether audiences durably associate the event with the destination.

To our knowledge, no transparent, evidence-based instrument is available for scoring territorial embeddedness at the level of an individual event edition. This study therefore asks which criteria can be used to assess the territorial embeddedness of an event, and how the resulting composite score should be interpreted. Its contribution is threefold. It operationalises the concept as four criteria with explicit scoring and evidence rules; it examines the formal properties of the composite score, namely compensability, sensitivity to weights and the treatment of missing evidence; and it demonstrates an evidence audit on two real events in Samarkand.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research design

This is a methodological, model-building study. Literature was selected purposively from four bodies of work: event tourism and portfolio management [1]–[6], economic geography and placemaking [7]–[9], the construction of composite indicators [12]–[14], and the measurement of inter-rater agreement [15], [16]. The selection was not a full systematic review. No visitor survey or expert panel was conducted, and evidence on real events was restricted to official public documents [10], [11], [17], [18].

2.2. Unit of assessment and evidence ledger

The unit of assessment is an event edition: a named event held in a specified year at a specified location. Editions rather than events are scored because the organiser, venue and rights arrangements of the same festival may change from one year to the next. Generic categories such as “festivals” are not scored. For every criterion the assessor records the title and date of the supporting document and the reason for the score. This evidence ledger makes each score traceable and allows a second assessor to re-score the same material independently.

2.3. Criteria and scoring rules

Table 1 sets out the four criteria and their scoring conditions. Local resource dependence (C1) captures whether the content of the event draws on resources that are specific to the destination and not readily substitutable, such as heritage sites, intangible heritage or local producers; this is the attribute that allows hallmark events to derive value from uniqueness [4] and to contribute to placemaking [9]. Governance and brand rights (C2) capture who holds decision rights over the programme and the event brand; rotating events whose rights holders award hosting under contract are, by construction, weakly anchored [2]. Recurrence (C3) captures documented repetition at the destination. Place identification (C4) captures whether the event’s name and its audiences associate it with the destination [4], [8].

Each criterion is scored 1 (strong embeddedness), 0.5 (partial embeddedness) or 0 (absence of embeddedness supported by evidence). Where evidence is lacking, the criterion is recorded as unknown rather than as zero. This separation of a documented zero from an absence of evidence is a central feature of the model.

A three-level scale was chosen deliberately. Finer scales increase the burden on assessors and invite spurious precision when the underlying evidence is documentary, whereas three ordered levels correspond to the questions an assessor can actually answer from a document: is the attribute present, partly present or demonstrably absent? Evidence is ranked in a simple hierarchy, with legal and contractual documents taking precedence over official releases and official releases over media reports; a score supported only by lower-ranked evidence is flagged in the ledger.

Table 1. Criteria and scoring rules for the territorial embeddedness of an event edition

Criterion	Score 1	Score 0.5	Score 0 or unknown
C1 Local resource dependence	Event content depends directly on a specific local resource	Resource is important but substitutable	0 if absence of dependence is documented; unknown if there is no evidence
C2 Governance and brand rights	Authority and rights of a local party are stated in a document	Decisions or rights are shared among several parties	0 if external control is documented; unknown if there is no document
C3 Recurrence	Repeated editions at the destination are documented	A plan for repetition exists, but the track record is short	0 if a rotating or one-off format is documented; unknown if the next venue is undetermined
C4 Place identification	Name and audience data show a stable association with the destination	Association observed among some groups or channels only	0 if absence of association is verified; unknown if there are no audience data

Source: author’s scoring procedure, informed by [1]–[4], [9], [12]. The scale is a methodological proposal.

2.4. Aggregation

When all four criteria are known, the composite score of event edition i is the arithmetic mean of its criterion scores:

$$S_i = 1/K \sum_{k=1}^K c_{ik}, \quad K=4 \quad (1)$$

where S_i is the composite score and c_{ik} is the score of criterion k . S_i ranges from 0 to 1 and cannot be interpreted as revenue, as a percentage of economic effect or as a probability. Equal weights do not assert that the four criteria are equally important in economic terms; they were chosen as a transparent starting point, in line with guidance that weights and aggregation rules be stated explicitly and tested [12]. The arithmetic mean is fully compensatory, so that a high score on one criterion offsets a low score on another [12], [14]. To make this property visible, two non-compensatory benchmarks were also computed: the geometric mean and the minimum of the four scores.

2.5. Robustness checks

Three checks were applied. First, a leave-one-out test removed each criterion in turn and recomputed the mean of the remaining three, showing how far the composite depends on any single criterion. Second, sensitivity to weights was examined by drawing 100,000 weight vectors from a flat Dirichlet distribution, $\text{Dir}(1, 1, 1, 1)$, which samples uniformly from all non-negative weights summing to one, and by recording the resulting distribution of weighted scores and ranks, following uncertainty-analysis practice for composite indicators [13]. Third, for a profile with a set U of unknown criteria, the admissible interval of the composite was computed as

$$S_i^L = (\sum_{k \notin U} c_{ik})/K, \quad S_i^U = (\sum_{k \notin U} c_{ik} + |U|)/K \quad (2)$$

that is, by setting every unknown score first to 0 and then to 1. These worst-case bounds follow the logic of partial identification, which reports what the available evidence supports without imposing untestable assumptions on the missing part [19].

2.6. Test material

The checks were applied to four stylised profiles, A–D (Table 2), and to a fifth profile, E, containing one unknown criterion. These profiles are not expert scores of real events; they were constructed to expose the behaviour of the aggregation rule. The evidence rules were then applied to two real event editions hosted in Samarkand: the 13th Sharq Taronalari festival (2024) and the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference (2025). Only criteria for which the cited official documents contain direct evidence were scored, and all others were left unknown. This documentary pre-assessment was carried out by a single assessor and is reported as an illustration of the procedure, not as a validated rating.

3. Results

3.1. Stylised profiles and compensability

Table 2 reports the composite scores of the stylised profiles. Profile A, with three high scores and one moderate score, obtained $S = 0.875$. Profiles B and C obtained the same score of 0.500, although all four criteria in B are moderate, whereas C combines two high scores with two documented zeros. Profile D, with a single high criterion, obtained 0.250. The non-compensatory benchmarks separate B from C: both the geometric mean and the minimum equal 0.500 for B and 0 for C. Figure 1 shows how an identical composite can arise from opposite structures; the two scores of 0.500 should not be read as describing the same governance situation.

Table 2. Criterion scores and composite scores for four stylised profiles

Profile	C1	C2	C3	C4	S (mean)	Geometric mean	Minimum
A: three high, one moderate	1	1	0.5	1	0.875	0.841	0.500

Profile	C1	C2	C3	C4	S (mean)	Geometric mean	Minimum
B: all criteria moderate	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.500	0.500	0.500
C: two high, two zero	1	0	1	0	0.500	0.000	0.000
D: one high, three zero	0	0	0	1	0.250	0.000	0.000

Source: author's calculations. The profiles are stylised and do not rate real events.

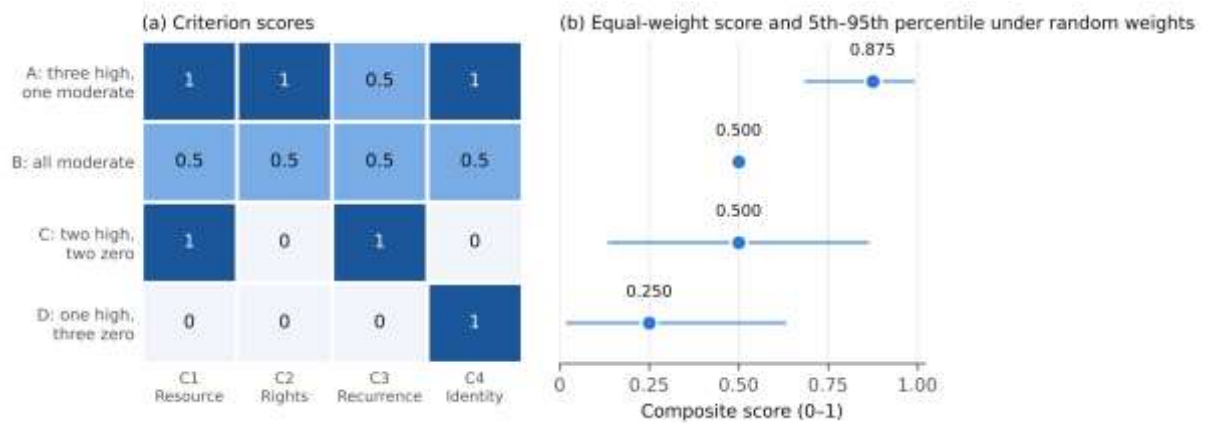


Figure 1. Criterion profiles and composite scores of the stylised profiles

Source: Tables 2 and 4. Panel (b) shows the equal-weight score (dot) and the 5th–95th percentile range under random weights (line). The scores do not rate real events.

3.2. Leave-one-out and weight sensitivity

Table 3 summarises both robustness checks. Because all of B's scores are equal, removing any criterion leaves its mean unchanged at 0.500. In C, removing a high-scoring criterion lowers the mean to 0.333, whereas removing a zero raises it to 0.667. In D, removing the only high-scoring criterion reduces the score to zero. Under random weights, B remains fixed at 0.500, whereas the central 90% of C's scores spans 0.134 to 0.865. The probability that C outranks B is 0.498, matching the analytical value of 0.5, because the combined weight on C's two high criteria follows a symmetric Beta(2, 2) distribution. Profile A ranked first in 88.9% of the draws and D ranked last in 74.8%. Profile B never ranked first or last, which illustrates that a uniformly moderate profile is the most robust to weighting, whereas an uneven profile such as C can occupy any position. The ranges in Table 3 are not statistical confidence intervals; they describe sensitivity to the weighting assumption alone.

Table 3. Sensitivity of the composite score to omitted criteria and to weights

Profile	S (four criteria)	Leave-one-out min	Leave-one-out max	Random weights P5	Random weights P95	Ranked first (%)	Ranked last (%)
A	0.875	0.833	1.000	0.685	0.992	88.9	0.0
B	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.0	0.0
C	0.500	0.333	0.667	0.134	0.865	11.1	25.2
D	0.250	0.000	0.333	0.017	0.633	0.0	74.8

Source: author's calculations based on Table 2; 100,000 weight vectors drawn from Dir(1, 1, 1, 1). P5 and P95 are the 5th and 95th percentiles. The ranges are not statistical confidence intervals.

3.3. Missing evidence

Missing information also affects the composite. Profile E has scores of 1, unknown, 1 and 0.5, so that the known scores sum to 2.5. If the unknown score lies anywhere between 0 and 1, the composite lies between 0.625 and 0.875. Recording the unknown as zero would present the lowest point of this interval as the final score. Averaging only the three known criteria yields 0.833, which silently imputes the unknown with the mean of the others. Only the interval represents what the evidence actually supports (Figure 2).

3.4. Evidentiary value of official sources

Official sources differ markedly in what they can document (Table 4). The Ministry of Culture release on the 13th Sharq Taronalari festival lists the festival's editions from 1997 to 2024 [10], which supports a recurrence score of 1. The same release states that the festival was held under the auspices of UNESCO and that its jury was formed by an organising committee, but it does not identify who owns the festival brand or who approves the programme, so C2 remains unknown. The release locates the festival in Samarkand, whose historic city is inscribed on the World Heritage List [17], but whether the programme depends on resources that could not be substituted elsewhere requires rater judgement; C1 was therefore left unknown at this stage. No evidence on audience association was available (C4 unknown). The admissible interval for this festival edition is 0.25–1.00. The unknowns indicate where further documents should be sought: the government portal's page for the festival refers to an order of 25 April 2019 (No. 354) approving the regulations on holding the festival [18], which is the document against which C2 should be scored, while C4 can be resolved only with audience data.

For the UNESCO General Conference, the release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirms that the session took place in Samarkand and describes it as the largest international forum held outside the Organization's headquarters for the first time in 40 years [11]. This documents both that decisions on the venue rest with an external organisation (C2 = 0) and that hosting in Samarkand was exceptional rather than recurrent (C3 = 0). C1 and C4 remain unknown, giving an admissible interval of 0.00–0.50. The two intervals overlap only between 0.25 and 0.50: documented evidence alone already points to different embeddedness positions, while the exact score of each edition remains undetermined (Figure 2).

Table 4. Documentary pre-assessment of two event editions hosted in Samarkand

Criterion		Sharq Taronalari, 13th edition (2024)	UNESCO General Conference, 43rd session (2025)
C1	Local resource	Unknown: held in Samarkand, a World Heritage city [10], [17]; dependence of the programme on local resources requires rater judgement	Unknown: not addressed in the source [11]
C2	Rights	Unknown: held under UNESCO auspices; jury formed by an organising committee; brand ownership and programme approval not stated [10]	0: statutory session of an external organisation; holding it away from headquarters described as exceptional [11]
C3	Recurrence	1: editions from 1997 to 2024 listed [10]	0: first forum of this scale outside headquarters in 40 years [11]
C4	Identification	Unknown: no audience data	Unknown: no audience data
Admissible interval, Eq. (2)		0.25–1.00	0.00–0.50

Source: author's single-assessor reading of official documents. The table illustrates the evidence procedure and is not a validated rating.

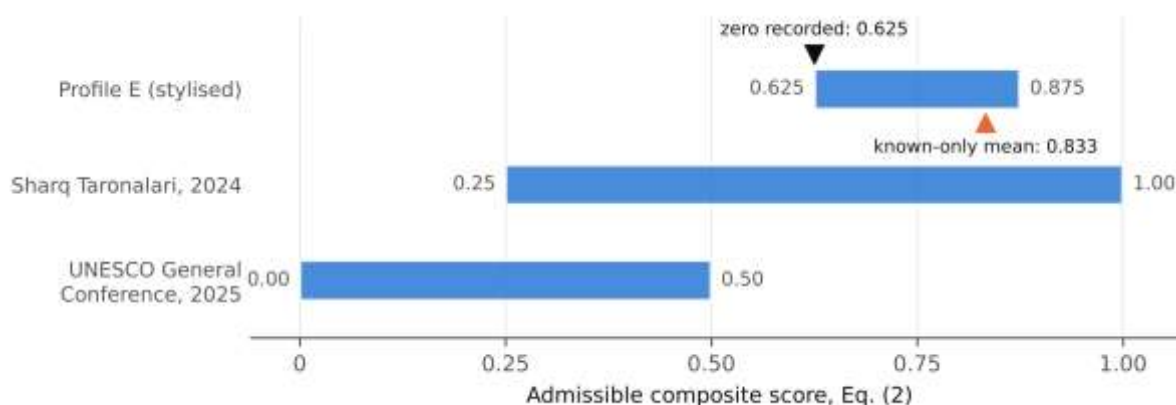


Figure 2. Admissible score intervals when evidence is missing

Source: Section 3.3 and Table 4. Bars span the bounds of Eq. (2); for profile E, markers show the scores obtained by recording the unknown criterion as zero or by averaging the known criteria only.

4. Discussion

4.1. What the score is for

The practical function of the model is to establish, before an event is selected for a portfolio, which documents are needed and what they show. A low score is not a reason to reject an event automatically. A weakly embedded congress may serve scientific, diplomatic or reputational objectives, and the UNESCO General Conference is a clear example of an event whose value to the host city does not depend on its recurrence there. Conversely, a high score does not show that a local festival justifies its costs. Portfolio decisions require embeddedness, demand and economic outcomes to be kept analytically separate [3], [6]. Economic outcomes call for their own measurement, based on incremental visitor nights, spending and costs, and are prone to inflation when these distinctions are blurred [20].

The results also show why a composite score should never be reported alone. Under a compensatory mean, profiles with opposite structures receive the same score, and their ranking depends entirely on weights that, at this stage, have no empirical basis. Reporting the full criterion profile together with a non-compensatory benchmark preserves the information a planner needs: an event with a documented zero for rights faces a different management problem from one that is moderately embedded on every dimension [14].

Read together with demand and strategic value, the profile suggests differentiated portfolio roles. Events that are strongly embedded and attract strong demand are candidates for anchor status and multi-year support. Events with high strategic value but weak embeddedness, such as rotating congresses, are better pursued selectively, under hosting agreements that secure local procurement, training and data-sharing so that some benefits remain after the event moves on [2], [3]. Embedded events with limited demand may warrant development support, whereas events that score low on both counts deserve scrutiny before public resources are committed. These roles are hypotheses for planning dialogue, not outputs of the score itself. A wide admissible interval, such as the festival's 0.25–1.00, is itself informative: it signals that the event cannot yet be classified and that the next step is gathering evidence rather than refining the score.

4.2. Rights and identification require specific evidence

Three notions must be kept apart under the rights criterion: the local registration of the organiser, the authority to approve the programme and the ownership of the event brand. A press release that names one organisation does not show that all three rights are held by it. The assessor should therefore cite the specific legal, regulatory or contractual document

on which each rights score rests. The Sharq Taronalari case illustrates the point: an official release can establish recurrence while remaining silent on ownership.

Place identification cannot be inferred from the event's name. "Sharq Taronalari" ("Melodies of the East") does not contain the name of the city, yet it may be strongly associated with Samarkand; conversely, an event named after a city may be perceived as a generic brand. Audience association should be tested through visitor surveys or a pre-specified content analysis of media coverage.

4.3. Reliability protocol

Before the model is used operationally, two independent assessors should score the same evidence ledger. Agreement on the ordinal scores can be measured with weighted kappa, which gives partial credit for adjacent disagreements [15]. Agreement on the prior classification of each criterion as known or unknown should be reported separately, because it reflects consistency in reading the evidence rather than in judging it. Since the scores feed into resource allocation, a demanding threshold is advisable, for instance a kappa of at least 0.80, the level that McHugh [16] describes as strong agreement. A pilot on a set of event editions large enough to produce disagreements on every criterion, followed by a consensus meeting to sharpen the scoring conditions in Table 1, would allow the rules to be revised before full use. No independent rating was carried out in the present study.

4.4. Limitations and further research

The principal limitations are the use of stylised profiles and equal weights. The arithmetic soundness of the calculation does not guarantee that the criteria work reliably in practice, and the documentary audit relied solely on public releases and a single assessor. Further research should apply the model to the full set of events held in Samarkand and other Uzbek destinations, using legal documents, organiser interviews and independent assessors; derive weights through stakeholder elicitation or data-driven methods and test them as recommended for composite indicators [12], [13]; and relate embeddedness profiles to observed outcomes such as repeat editions, visitor nights and local spending.

5. Conclusion

This paper proposed assessing the territorial embeddedness of an event through four criteria—local resource dependence, governance and brand rights, recurrence and place identification—scored on an evidence-based ordinal scale with a separate "unknown" state. The calculations showed that the same composite score can conceal opposite criterion structures, that the relative position of such profiles can depend entirely on the weights, and that treating missing evidence as zero biases the score down to the lower bound of its admissible interval. In practical application, the composite should therefore always be accompanied by the individual criterion scores, the source of the evidence for each score, the interval bounds where evidence is missing and a list of the information still required. The documentary audit of two Samarkand events showed that official releases can establish recurrence and external control but rarely brand ownership or audience association. The next stage is independent validation on real event portfolios. The economic results of events should continue to be measured separately, using data on additional overnight stays, visitor spending and costs.

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