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The Digital Frontier: Exhibiting the Transformative Impact of Technology on Enhancing Event Attendees' Experiences in Oman

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Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to review the benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives and to evaluate the influence of technology on event attendees' experiences in Oman.

Design/methodology/approach: The study used a quantitative research approach and a descriptive research design. Non-probability sampling was used in this study. The data was collected from 137 respondents through a questionnaire. The data were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage, rank, weighted mean, and Pearson's coefficient.

Findings: Among the participants, the majority of the visitors attended more than five events per year and most of the people liked attending physical events. The highest mean score for the benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives was 'Using technology to post comments, read others comments, and enquiring about the events. The highest mean score for the influence of technology on event attendees' experiences in Oman was 'Technology helped to learn about the events, search for promo codes, discount coupons, and get tickets at discounted prices.'

Research limitations/implications: Technology and events interaction help in the creation of culturally relevant technology-driven events in Oman. Event planners and organizers can think of various ways to improve the attendees' experience through various technologies. Social media integration, new mobile applications, and other interactive technologies provide customized experiences. The results of this provide opportunities for further analysis of the effects of artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) on Omani event experiences. It will help attract more people to events and thus increase tourism in the country.

Social Implications: Technology impacts people's attendance at events in Oman with significant social ramifications that touch on some societal concerns. It provides insights into how technical advancements and cultural values and customs could be harmonized to create mutually beneficial relationships of both the past and the present. Events that increasingly rely on technology may require programs to improve people's digital literacy to guarantee that people can take full advantage of and participate in tech-driven experiences.

Originality / Value: It is critical to investigate the technological developments in the event industry and determine how event planners and organizers may use them to provide their guests with an experience. Despite its significance, to date, no research has been conducted on how technology affects the experiences of event participants in Oman. As a result, the current study is crucial, and its findings will be useful to many stakeholders, including the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, tourism organizations, tour planners, planners, and organizers of events.

Keywords: Event Attendees' Experience, Event Technologies, Event Technology Influence, Event Technology Benefits, Event Characteristics.

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Introduction

In the present scenario, it is difficult to imagine a life without technology as it fosters interpersonal relationships and is constantly evolving (Mahmood et al., 2000). Sherlock & O'Connor (2014) stated that event management is complicated by the significant need for human resources as specialists for event managers, promoters, organizers, and receptionists. However, with technological developments, the events industry has become somewhat shortened, and the ability to facilitate the life cycle of events has enhanced attendees' experience (Sox et al., 2017). Ryan et al. (2020) detailed that the internet is one of the most effective technological developments, including social media, applications, and virtual platforms, which are the main drivers of how the target audience is invited and attracted. Boley (2020) stated that the remarkable technological changes that took place in the event industry began in 2000. The first virtual trade fair was ExpoExchange, held on SpotMe. The event allowed attendees to see photos and contact information of other people who were attending, enabling them to share their opinions, information, and ideas about what was discussed in the event or meeting. Boley (2020) further specified that the events industry, like many others, benefits from the latest technological developments, which they use to enhance their growth. Technological developments have successfully aided in bridging gaps across borders and facilitating collaboration across a range of sectors and businesses (Davidson et al., 2002).

Event technology is a dynamic, rapidly developing field vital for organizing, publicizing, and holding events. Due to advancements in event technologies, organizers have been able to target a large number of attendees without resorting to heavy advertising campaigns and expensive marketing materials (Osborne, 2017). Copans (2020) declared that there is no need to get paper tickets to attend events where the mobile phone makes it easy for attendees to purchase tickets through online websites or the event's application with just one click. Attendees can buy tickets without much effort and save time. Virtual reality technology enables attendees to attend events at a 360-degree angle without the need to attend them physically (Getz & Page, 2020). Therefore, with technology, it is easy for event companies to create the best experiences for their target audience and maximize local and international events.

According to UNESCO (2016), one region that acknowledges the significance of the corporate events industry is the Middle East. In recent years, several cities, such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Riyad, have gained popularity in business and tourism. This could be the result of their realization that diversification is necessary to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. Hanly (2012) considered that corporate events offer avenues for showcasing a country internationally, fostering new corporate partnerships, and facilitating the exchange of information and technology. Davidson & Turner (2017) stated that because of their advantageous locations and advanced infrastructure, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman are now the region's top destinations for corporate events. According to Muthuraman & Al-Haziazi (2019), the event industry has evolved several variables, the most important of which is technological progress. Oman has made remarkable progress in the field of information and communication technology over the past decade (Times News Service, 2022). The largest section of customers consists of 5,289,594 prepaid mobile phone subscriptions; this figure is expected to increase by 10% by the end of June 2023. There are 5,937,159 active mobile broadband Internet subscribers (ONA, 2023). It was observed that the numbers are increasing every year, which is a good indicator of people's awareness of the use of information and communication technology.

Information and communication technology has been able to support in development of the tourism sector, especially in the events and conference industries (Sox et al., 2017). The information technology authority works closely with Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), which is an institution that focuses on the future in developing information and communication technology (ICT) businesses and raising awareness of its importance in Oman, as well as promoting innovation and creativity and raising the quality of design services (Times News Service, 2022). Information Technology Authority (ITA) launched many activities and performances at the Salalah Tourism Festival, which takes place in the fall season between July and August, intending to educate the target audience about technological use based on the success achieved during the past years (Oman Observer, 2019). For example, the visit of thousands of visitors to the ITA pavilion during the festival is a testament that Oman can reach a large number of public gatherings from Oman and abroad using technology (Oxford Business Group, 2018). On the other hand, due to the importance of technology, the COMEX exhibition is considered a major source for the technology market in the Sultanate of Oman and one of the leading platforms in the Gulf region, specializing in communication technology, product launches, and new technology offerings. The exhibition includes leading technology and information manufacturers,

innovators, and businessmen to display the most advanced and innovative products, which in turn contributes to the development of multiple industries, especially tourism (Oman News Agency, 2022).

Future Tech Event (FTE) was the first virtual exhibition and summit in Oman, which was held for the first time during October 7–8, 2020 (Future Tech Event, 2020). The event aims to engage the target audience and those interested through virtual interactions and meetings to take advantage of the latest technology and event technology available to date. The event also dealt with the latest information and communication technology products and services, high-tech and quality tools, and advanced consumer electronics in all sectors. What distinguishes the event is that it is designed to reach a greater number of target stakeholders and communicate with other major exhibitions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Future Tech Event, 2023). It is worth noting that this type of event contributes to the awareness and education of target people to adapt to technological developments, as it contributes to increasing the connection and communication of organizers and exhibitors with target stakeholders (Allen, 2000). Therefore, the tourism authorities in Oman have directed their focus towards the substantial growth prospects and revenue stream that accompany the transformation of the nation into a preeminent regional hub for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) (Oxford Business Group, 2018). Likewise, there has been a paradigm shift in Oman's tourism industry towards more intelligent, user-friendly systems based on information technology (Muthuraman & Al-Haziazi, 2019). These systems are referred to as 'smart tourism', and they depend on cloud computing, mobile communication, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence technology.

Along with its rich cultural heritage, newly built international airport, and sophisticated conference and exhibition centers, Oman has managed to be an ideal place to hold seminars, events, conferences, festivals, and exhibitions that may be seasonal or annual, such as the Muscat Festival, Salalah Festival, and Tour of Oman (Oxford Business Group, 2018). International Trade Administration (2022) added that, with remarkable technological progress, the events industry has developed, which made Oman Vision 2040 focus on enhancing technical capabilities and creating a vital infrastructure for ICT, as it is the most effective means of enabling access to the target audience and enabling them to participate (Oman News Agency, 2022). Oman's strategy has been effective in bridging the digital divide, and the percentage of ICT users has increased by approximately 90% by 2023 (ONA, 2023). This has helped increase the spread of smart devices and computers, as well as programs and other technologies, which in turn has contributed to enhancing productivity and improving communication and interaction between organizations and the public. In 2020 and 2021, 94% of people aged 18 years or older had smartphones (Times News Service, 2022).

It is critical to investigate the most recent technological developments in the event industry and how event planners and organizers may use them to provide their guests with experiences that they will not soon forget (Alex, 2020). Despite its significance, to date, no research has been conducted on how technology affects event participants' experiences in Oman. Therefore, the goal of this study is to close this gap in the literature and provide much-needed data that will be useful for future scholars. As a result, the current study is crucial.

Research Questions

- What benefits does technology bring about transforming events from the viewpoint of attendees?
- How does technology affect the experiences of those who attend events in Oman?

Research objectives

- To review the benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives.
- To evaluate the influence of technology on event attendees' experiences in Oman.

Review of Literature

According to Copans (2020), the term 'event technology' refers to a broad range of electronic tools, software programs, and devices that make organizing, coordinating, and facilitating events easier and more enjoyable. Meeting and event planners may boost return on investment, optimize guest satisfaction, and streamline operations using appropriate event technology (Industry Arc, 2021). Vaezi et al. (2016) stated that technology has changed various sectors and specialties, including the events and meetings industry, which would make it more efficient and quality. Sox et al. (2017) mentioned that event apps, special software, and live chat sessions are designed for events, meetings, trade shows, and businesses to help people get as much information as possible so that they are fully aware. These apps provide all the information attendees need, such as schedules, maps, attendance information, exhibitor information, and speaker biographies (Mobile Event Apps, 2021). It enables them to reach the target audience through social media, through which event planners promote the event and publish everything related to information, details, and how to register on websites via the Internet (Hendler, 2009). Consequently, it is easier for planners to manage the budget, which

is considered to be one of the most important tasks performed by the event planner and organizer. Usually, traditional communication channels, such as advertisements in various promotional channels, set a high price for preparing them for an event or meeting, but with the presence of technology systems, it has become less necessary than it used to be previously, in light of the presence of smart devices, social media, and the Internet (Abulibdeh & Zaidan, 2017).

The Role of Technology in Various Aspects of Events

Davidson et al. (2002) mentioned that modern technology has allowed event organizers to work through various applications and software without the need to leave their offices and has facilitated the removal of complications that may be difficult for them. Organizers can also use social media and email addresses to target potential audiences (Heinze et al., 2016). It is now crucial for event planners to build websites, develop apps, or create specialized social media pages with all the information about the event, including the location, schedule of events, and links to resources for information about local entertainment and tourist attractions (Abulibdeh & Zaidan, 2017). Mahdzar et al. (2017) further mentioned that event technology allowed participants to take part in events virtually through a variety of programs for those who were unable to attend in person due to unforeseen circumstances. Goenka (2019) asserted that the new framework of technology fosters the creation of new and improved patterns of communication to improve event production, target audience satisfaction, and innovation. Slocum & Lee (2014) explained how technology efficiently helped with event planning by reducing environmental effects and offering a network of interactions with target audiences and stakeholders.

Event technologies that provide audio and video communications about the locations, transportation, lodging, and destinations of the event can help organizers produce a conference or event that is more ecologically friendly (Eugenio, 2017). This has helped cut down on the amount of paper used and instead emphasizes using the web, email, electronic registration, electronic hotel reservation lists, and online check-in and check-out services for participants (Goenka, 2019). Vaezi et al. (2016) stated that through technology, event management was able to adopt the 3R strategy- reduction, reuse, and recycling, which contributed to reducing waste in the environment, reducing costs, improving revenue management, and increasing the quality of the experience for the event. On the other hand, Shanker (2008) described that the Internet of Things (IoT) is responsible for connecting smart devices via Internet protocols. These devices may include tools, sensors, and artificial intelligence tools that allow one to search for a place without the need for physical presence. Therefore, the Internet is the main driver of smart devices and modern technologies (Hendler, 2009).

Event organizers and managers benefit from these tools, such as determining whether the event location is appropriate and how to operate it. Next, a virtual reality environment was created using different programs and presented to the user so that they could see and accept it in a real environment (Boley, 2020). Social media, which is considered an interactive tool, facilitates the creation or sharing of information, ideas, opinions, and interests across communities and virtual networks, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter (Lee, 2011). Li & Chang (2016) added that social media plays an effective role in marketing events and conferences, as it provides an opportunity for event organizers to directly access the target market through the reactions and opinions that they write through various social media channels. Using social media, organizers tend to understand the desires and needs of the audience, thus facilitating their understanding of their requirements and developing a plan and strategy that includes what the target audience expects (Heinze et al., 2016). Social media has contributed to reaching a greater number of target audiences at the lowest cost than traditional methods, which results in increasing the level of the event as well as target audience satisfaction at the same time (Abulibdeh & Zaidan, 2017).

The Benefits of Technology in Transforming Events are Based on the Attendees' Perspectives

Technology has helped event makers increase the sensory factor (impression) of those attending an event, meeting, or conference (Alex, 2020). Eugenio (2017) stated that new technologies have managed to attract a greater number of people interested in attending events, which saves wealth and time for event organizers. The development of technology helped to elevate the event industry, define the needs and data that the target audience expects, and thus help in controlling attendance, publicity, advertising, sponsorship, and sales (Goenka, 2019). Attendees will be better able to gain technological experience, adapt to, and keep pace with the development of technologies, mobile and smart devices, and the diversity of social media (Solaris, 2018). Mahdzar et al. (2017) mentioned that the event industry emerged as a powerful tool that garnered significant interest and expanded it to a large extent, especially when technology entered the event industry's field as a catalyst for linking event organizers with attendees. Getz & Page (2020) agreed that events that use the latest technologies, such as high-end live streaming technologies, LED display screens, and the ability to record

and replay events during and after they happen, will have happy customers and can increase social participation and value for the target audience.

The rapid development of technology, especially the means of communication, played a major role in people's easy interaction and helped them understand the needs, requirements, and preferences of the target audience (Jung & Tanford, 2017). Sung & Lee (2015) described that the means of communication provided an opportunity for the attendees to communicate their messages, opinions, ideas, and what they expected about the event in a faster, easier, more efficient, and less time-consuming manner, thus making the event organizers more aware of the target audience's needs, wants, and desires and providing them with the best experience. It is worth noting that the technology of events facilitates many important benefits for attendees, such as searching for event information, including event dates, whom to contact, agenda, and ticket information, without wasting time visiting event venues (Eugenio, 2017; Boley, 2020)). Vario (2019) mentioned that before the event technology, hosting and participating in the event were manual tasks that required printing tickets, attendance lists, verifying registration, and manually arranging food. Jung & Tanford (2017) stated that measuring the effectiveness of an event's success was almost impossible, as most respondents were reluctant to fill out a hard copy of the questionnaire. Therefore, merging technology with event management has resulted in various benefits. Bronson (2018) described that event technologies allow for increased participation and attract the attention of the target audience. Ryan et al. (2020) and Melo et al. (2022) stated that event technology allows attendees to interact, respond, and participate in real-time polls during an event.

McKinley (2020) stated that technology helps to control and track events without manual calculations as it is possible to log in and track social activity, polls, and lists of total attendees. It is fair to say that event technology simplifies and accelerates the processes of success, monitoring, and control. Sung & Lee (2015) indicated that it is important to communicate with the target audience and is an integral part of the attendees' experience at any event. Therefore, event technologies should provide opportunities to communicate with the target audience before, during, and after an event (Melo et al., 2022). Ryan et al. (2020) stated that technology makes it easier for people to attend events because it makes it possible for them to stay in touch with their friends before, during, and after the event. Solaris (2018) mentioned that technology helps in developing e-mail and social media marketing campaigns to excite the enthusiasm of the target audience and create applications via smartphones that remind the target audience of event times, venues, activities, and all details related to the event.

Salvatori (2023) stated that radio frequency identification (RFID) technology can be used to measure traffic flow within an event space and launch questionnaires and surveys on various smart devices. It is worth noting that collecting data digitally helps in processing the data quickly and identifying trends is much easier (Corbin Ball & Co., 2017). Capasa et al. (2022) added that technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) contribute to the development of events as they are more digital, just as much as the actual. Artificial intelligence technology allows organizers and attendees to be present in more than one place and anywhere in the world (Copans, 2020; Ryan et al., 2020). VR, AR, and AI have contributed to providing automated security measures through various scenarios to manage potential risks (Ovation Global DMC, 2023). Technology-enabled attendees to attend remotely without moving themselves to the actual site of the event (Bizzabo Blog Staff, 2023).

The Influence of Technology on Event Attendees' Experiences in Oman

Attendees have become more aware of new technologies that, in turn, contribute to increasing their interaction and enthusiasm for attending an event (Corbin Ball & Co., 2017). With new technologies, attendees will have a unique experience that makes this experience more interactive and applicable without effort, cost, or difficulty (Brooke, 2022). The technology has contributed to giving its users an enjoyable experience, and it is expected that virtual reality technology will become a popular way organizers broadcast various events (Sherlock & O'Connor, 2014). Lee (2011) mentioned that YouTube provided a unique opportunity for attendees to watch different events and their clips in a 360-degree range. Salvatori (2023) mentioned that live broadcasts using Skype, Webex, Zoom, Vimeo, Dacast, LinkedIn Live, and other platforms have contributed to reaching the largest target audience, providing cost savings for event organizers, and broadening their target market. According to Mahmood et al. (2000), the use of technology in events helps to convince the target audience of amazing experiences. Technical capabilities such as sound, lighting, speakers, live broadcasting, LED screens, and virtual reality experiences help to leave a lasting, positive impression on attendees and make them always excited to return to the event (Lancashire, 2023). Therefore, integrating technology into events contributes to the creation of unique and memorable experiences.

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According to Jung & Tanford (2017), technological advancements in the event industry contributed to the participation of the target audience of the event, combining their five senses, as 90% of the attendees remembered the details of the event, which included modern technologies, such as custom lighting, 3D imaging, LED screens, and surround sound. However, Fryatt et al. (2012) argued that the audience will not have a good event experience if they cannot see, hear, or interact with the organizers. Therefore, events must have high-end video and audio equipment, robust AI and virtual reality tools, and live information channels that immerse themselves in the event (Ryan et al., 2020; Bizzabo Blog Staff, 2023). Calibration of the presentation and content is another concern related to the attendees' experiences (Ovation Global DMC, 2023). Moreover, Rogers (2013) asserted that one of the primary attractions of events is the opportunity for social contact among participants, which allows attendees to communicate seamlessly because many events are important for creating connections, dialogues, and relationships between attendees, hosts, and participants. Conversely, McKinley (2020) declared that if there were no conversations, participants could feel disappointed and experience unpleasantness. Getz & Page (2020) clarified that, as people attend gatherings to celebrate, socialize, and conduct business, technology should make social interactions easier. Similarly, Sung & Lee (2015) confirmed that immersive experiences, continuous connections, face-to-face interactions, co-creation, and co-production are essential components of an event.

As technology advances, new realistic and engaging experiences become possible, allowing viewers to interact with their surroundings in addition to just observing an event (Bladen et al., 2018). Stova (2023) asserted that event technologies enable people to communicate with organizers in real-time and greater detail, as well as establish a continuous interactive conversation. Additionally, there is a chance that this will enhance guest-host interactions. Brooke (2022) added that interacting with audiences via consumer-delivered apps and website-based engagement not only creates value but also encourages additional engagement. Perceived value is influenced by event quality, which affects the participants' pleasure (Allen, 2000). Individuals strongly believe that technology is beneficial to them, adds value, and feel competent in using IoT services (Pick, 2020). Event planners are increasing their investments in event technology to create memorable, convenient, and interesting events (Bronson, 2018). Undoubtedly, using technology during an event may have a significant impact on participants' experiences. Stova (2023) stated that one of the main aims of the event industry is to produce memorable experiences, which are described as something that people will remember in their minds even after days, months, or even years have passed. The most unforgettable experiences for those who participate in an event are often generated by an event that aims to dazzle the audience with mixed-reality technologies, such as VR, AR, and AI (Ryan et al., 2020). Attendees' lasting impressions positively impact how they use technology at events, which in turn influences their propensity to return (Capasa et al., 2022). Any event's guests would probably be interested in returning in the future because of their positive and unforgettable experiences (Melo et al., 2022). Utilizing technology can also facilitate quicker processing and communication, which increases the productivity of an event. Using social media platforms for communication can help ensure that attendees have accurate information about events, ultimately resulting in a superior event experience (Solaris, 2018).

Methodology

A quantitative approach was used in this study. The reason for choosing a quantitative approach was based on the research objectives of the study, which contributed to generalizing the results to a wider group of target groups and presenting them in different forms (Cresswell, 2014). The research design is descriptive, which is defined as a research method that describes the characteristics of groups within the target population or the studied phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). Veal (2011) stated that this methodology describes the nature of the demographic segment, without focusing on the cause of a particular phenomenon. Cresswell (2014) mentioned that descriptive research is popular because it embodies the measurement of several variables, except that only one variable is needed. Therefore, descriptive research is appropriate for this study because it contributes to the analysis and evaluation of the ability of technology to maximize events in Oman and its benefits from the perspective of attendees.

The target population or participants in the study were residents of Oman, both Omanis and expatriates, aged 21 years and above. Regarding sampling, the study followed non-probability sampling. Creswell & Clark (2018) mentioned that by using a technique known as 'purposeful sampling', the researcher uses their discretion to select study participants. Similarly, an intentionally selected sample is called purposeful sampling, and it is a smaller, usually non-randomly chosen, portion of the population that is meant to logically represent the entire population (Veal, 2011). This can be achieved by choosing a sample that accurately reflects the variance in the population background (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The primary data for this research were collected through a questionnaire that had been developed by Ryan et al. (2020), but it was altered to

meet the requirements of the particular investigation.. collecting data through a questionnaire is inexpensive, easy to compare, and easy to analyze (De Leeuw et al., 2008; De Vaus, 2014). The study collected responses from 146 people out of which 137 fully completed responses were only included for the final analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using the corresponding descriptive statistics using frequency distribution, percentage, rank, weighted mean, and Pearson's coefficient. The researcher used the weighted mean to ascertain how technology might improve events from the viewpoints of attendees, as well as how technology affects attendees' experiences in Oman. The inferential statistical tool Spearman's coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the number of events visitors attended in Muscat and the technology used in events.

Findings

Table. 1 Respondent's Profile

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Entire Group	137	100
Gender		
Male	103	75.2
Female	34	24.8
Age		
21-30	38	27.7
31-40	92	67.1
41- 50	4	2.9
51- Above	3	2.3
Marital Status		
Single	39	28.5
Married	98	71.5
Nationality		
Omani	96	70.1
Non-Omani	41	29.9
Education		
High School	15	10.9
Diploma	37	27.0
Graduate	85	62.1
Income (OMR)		
0 to 500	45	32.9
501 to 1000	54	39.4
1001 to 1500	20	14.6
1501 and above	18	13.1

Table. 2 Respondents Event Characteristics

Description	Frequency	%
1. How many events did you attend in 2023?		
1-2	13	9.5
3-4	29	21.2
More than 5	95	69.3
Did not attended	0	0
2. Where did you find information related to events that you attended?		
Family & Friends	22	16.0
Colleagues & Neighbors	6	4.5
Social media	89	64.9
Radio	7	5.1
Newspapers	3	2.2
TV	3	2.2
Others	7	5.1
3. Type of event preferred		
Physical events	108	78.8

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Online events	29	21.2
4. Are you familiar with event technologies other than social media networks (Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube)?		
Yes	71	51.8
No	41	29.9
Not sure	25	18.3
5. In your opinion, what is technology's primary function in the events?		
Promoting events	36	13.1
To buy tickets online and contactless entry & exit	18	26.3
To spread awareness of the events	13	9.5
To Improve the attendee experience	43	31.4
Communication & sharing of information	29	19.7

Table. 2 shows the respondents' event characteristics. The majority went to events more frequently than five times annually. This is good news for those who host events because it indicates that most people are interested in attending events in Oman. The respondents' most trusted source of information regarding events in Oman was social media. The majority of people were interested in physical events. Only around half of the people were aware of the event technology, while the other half were not. The majority of respondents (31.4%) responded that it would enhance their attendance experience. This demonstrates that participants believe that the primary purpose of technology is to enhance attendees' experiences through online ticketing, contactless entry and exit, communication, and sharing of information.

Table. 3 The benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives

The benefits of technology	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Used technology to post comments, read others' comments, and enquire regarding events	4.52	0.918	1
Used technology to look up details about the events, including the date, time, location, and contact information	4.41	0.942	2
Used technology to buy tickets, make payments online, and reserve seats	4.38	0.919	3
Used technology for a contactless swipe to access events and print my name badges	4.33	0.839	4
Attended events more easily because of technology, which allowed me to communicate with my friends before, during, and after the event	4.26	1.116	5
My attendance at events was aided by event websites, mobile applications, social media pages, live chat sessions, and virtual Q&A	4.19	0.960	6
High-end live streaming technologies helped broadcast the event, which allowed attendees to be seated in the rear and corners of the room to watch the events effectively	4.11	0.988	7
Overall, technology has made events more creative, unique, and accessible	4.09	0.955	8
Able to watch and crosscheck the event later because it was recorded using different devices	3.93	0.936	9
Online promo codes and discount vouchers made it possible to register for events at affordable prices	3.86	0.982	10
I used event technologies, such as touch screens, large LED screens, and other devices, to access information about speakers, floor designs, agendas, and stands	3.75	1.109	11
A variety of technology-assisted events promote sustainability and eco-friendliness	3.68	0.839	12
Used technology to obtain more information by scanning QR codes and participating in live polls	3.56	1.169	13
Able to easily convert and listen to information in the mother tongue with the help of wearable technology	3.29	0.816	14

The mobile applications (Apps) for events are expertly optimized	3.17	1.136	15
The RFID wristbands made it easier for me to access and depart from events at different times, as well as to move among food courts, exhibits, parking lots, and other venues	2.88	0.864	16

Table. 3 shows the implications of the benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives. The highest mean score was for 'using technology to post comments, read others' comments, and enquire regarding events' (4.52). The second, third, and fourth highest mean scores were noted for: 'Used technology to look up details about the events, including the date, time, location, and contact information' (4.41), 'Used technology to buy tickets, make payments online, and reserve seats' (4.38), 'Used technology for a contactless swipe to access events and print my name badges' (4.33). This reveals that participants searched online for details about the activities, such as the date, time, place, and contact information. The respondents printed their name badges and used technology to enter events with a contactless swipe. They also used it to buy tickets make online payments, and reserve seats.

Other highest mean scores noted include, 'Attended events more easily because of the technology, which allowed me to communicate with my friends before, during, and after the event (4.26)'. 'Attendance at events was aided by event websites, mobile applications, social media pages, live chat sessions, and virtual Q&A (4.19)', 'High-end live streaming technologies helped broadcast the event, which allowed attendees to be seated in the rear and corners of the room to watch the events effectively (4.11)', 'Overall, technology has made events more creative, unique, and accessible' (4.09). This suggests that they were able to attend events with greater ease as a result of technology, which enabled them to stay in touch with their friends before, during, and after the event. Event websites, smartphone apps, social media pages, live chat rooms, and virtual Q&As helped to increase their participation in events. In addition, the event was broadcast using state-of-the-art live streaming technologies, which made it possible for attendees seated at the back and corners of the room to watch events efficiently.

In general, technology improves the creativity, individuality, and accessibility of events. Further, The participants scanned QR codes and participated in real-time polls to obtain additional information; wearable technology made it simple for them to convert and hear information in their native tongue, and well-optimized mobile applications (apps) were utilized for the events.

Table.4 The Influence of Technology on The Event Attendees' Experiences in Oman

The influence of technology	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Technology helped to learn about the events, search for promo codes and discount coupons, and get tickets at discounted prices	4.41	0.848	1
Social media platforms have contributed to increasing enthusiasm for events	4.36	1.230	2
The latest event technologies have the potential to improve the communication between hosts and guests	4.29	1.179	3
The latest technologies, such as AI, VR, live video, wearable technology, and event gamification, helped increase my participation and involvement in the event	4.21	0.826	4
My willingness to attend the events increased due to the quality of the content delivered through user-friendly technologies	4.17	1.318	5
Liked the event technologies as they allowed me to communicate with friends before, during, and after the event	3.96	0.921	6
Was able to save time and money because of the various technologies used by event organizers	3.82	1.261	7
Was able to obtain information about speakers, floor designs, agendas, and stands thanks to the technology	3.76	0.865	8
Event technologies provide added value to attendees	3.70	1.105	9
Satisfied with the wearable technologies used by event organizers, as they were allowed to translate the information into their native language	3.62	1.254	10
Utilize event technologies quite easily and are mobile-friendly	3.13	1.091	11

While facing issues, technology support was available through various apps, live chats, e-mails, or by phone	3.10	0.952	12
Enjoyed watching the recorded events because of their high-production content and excellent visuals	2.87	1.301	13
Technology made it easier to attend events using RFIDs, contactless swipes, QR codes, and other means	2.76	0.844	14

Table. 4 shows the influence of technology on event attendees' experience in Oman. The highest mean score was noted for 'Technology helped to learn about the events, search for promo codes and discount coupons, and obtain tickets at discount prices' (4.41). It suggests that technology-assisted them in finding out about the events, finding coupons and promo codes, and obtaining tickets at a reduced cost. 'Social media platforms have contributed to increasing enthusiasm for events' (4.36), and 'the latest event technologies have the potential to improve communication between hosts and guests' (4.29), as noted in the second and third highest rankings. This indicates that respondents' excitement for events has increased as a result of social media platforms, and they believe that visitors and hosts can communicate more effectively with one another thanks to the newest event technologies. The fourth and fifth highest mean scores were recorded for the 'latest technologies, such as AI, VR, live video, wearable technology, and event gamification, which helped increase participation and involvement in the event' (4.21), and 'Willingness to attend the events increased due to the quality of the content delivered through user-friendly technologies' (4.17). The findings suggest that cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), live video, wearable technology, and event gamification, enhanced respondents' engagement and participation in the event.

Moreover, respondents' willingness to attend the events rose as a result of the high-caliber content made available through user-friendly technologies. On the other hand, 'While facing issues, technology support was available through various apps, live chats, e-mails, or by phone' (3.10), and 'Enjoyed viewing the recorded event because of the high production content and beautiful visuals' (2.87) constituting some of the lowest reported mean scores. This validates those respondents who thought that technology help was always accessible via the phone, email, live chat, and other applications when facing problems. Additionally, they said that they enjoyed viewing the recorded event because of its excellent visuals and well-produced content. Event organizers must be aware of these areas because they receive low scores.

Table. 5 Overall experiences of event attendees in Oman

Description	Frequency	%	Rank
1. Your overall satisfaction with the event experience?			
Very satisfied	33	24.1	2
Satisfied	63	45.9	1
Neutral	14	10.3	4
Not Satisfied	19	13.9	3
Not at all satisfied	8	5.8	5
2. In the future, are you willing to attend more events if event organizers use the latest technologies			
Strongly Agree	32	23.4	2
Agree	70	51.1	1
Neutral	17	12.4	3
Disagree	15	10.9	4
Strongly disagree	3	2.2	5
3. Do you think, in the future, more people will visit events if event planners introduce the latest event technologies?			
Strongly Agree	50	36.5	1
Agree	46	33.6	2
Neutral	18	13.1	3
Disagree	10	7.3	5
Strongly disagree	13	9.5	4

Table. 5 presents the respondents' overall experiences of the events they had attended in Oman. 70 % of respondents expressed satisfaction with their event-related experiences. Among the respondents, 74.5 % of participants would be open to attending more events in the future, provided organizers made use of cutting-

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edge technology. It was revealed that 70.1 % of respondents believed that if event planners used the newest technologies, more people would attend events in the future.

Table. 6 Spearman's Correlation between the No. of Events Attended and the Technologies Used Events Attended

Variables		No. of Events attended	Technologies used Events Attended
	Spearman's Correlation	1	.714**
No. of events attended	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	137	137
	Spearman's Correlation	.714**	1
Technologies used Events Attended	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		137	137

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The findings in Table. 6 demonstrate a positive and statistically significant correlation between the number of events attended and the events they attend in Oman that use cutting-edge technologies. The obtained p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 and Spearman's coefficient was 0.714. These results imply that the number of events attended by visitors in Muscat and the technology used for events attended are dependent on each other.

Table. 7 Spearman's Correlation between Visitors' Recurrent Attendance at Events and the Technologies used by Event Organizers

Variables		Visitors' recurrent attendance at events	Technologies used by event organizers
	Spearman's Correlation	1	.684**
Visitors' recurrent attendance at events	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	137	137
	Spearman's Correlation	.684**	1
Technologies used by event organizers	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		137	137

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to Table 7, there is a substantial positive correlation between attendees' repeated attendance at events and the newest technology employed by Muscat event planners. The Spearman's coefficient was 0.684, with a p-value of 0.000 <0.05. This suggests a connection between the frequency with which guests attend events and the state-of-the-art technology employed by Muscat event organizers.

Discussion

Objective 1: To review the benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives

From Table. 3, using technology to post comments, read others' comments, and enquire about what is happening (4.52). They attended events more easily because of the technology, which allowed them to communicate with friends before, during, and after the event (4.26). From Table 2, it was noticed that 19.7% of respondents stated that the main function of technology at events is to facilitate communication and allow for sharing of information. These findings are consistent with those of Jung & Tanford (2017), Sung & Lee (2015), Rogers (2013), Solaris (2018), and Getz & Page (2020), Ryan et al. (2020) which emphasize the importance of event technologies in facilitating smooth communication among participants, because many events serve as platforms for building relationships, connections, and dialogues among guests, and hosts. In

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the end, better event engagement may be achieved by utilizing social media platforms for communication to guarantee that attendees receive appropriate information about events.

From Table. 3, the benefits of technology to event attendees were: Used technology to look up details about the events, including the date, time, location, and contact information (4.41). Attendance at events was aided by event websites, mobile applications, social media pages, live chat sessions, and virtual Q&A (4.19). From Table 2, it was noticed that 64.9% of the respondents stated that information related to the events was found on various social media platforms. These findings are similar to those by Eugenio (2017), Boley (2020), Hendler (2009), Mobile Event Apps (2021), and Sox et al. (2017), who noted that to help attendees make appropriate travel plans, event planners and organizers must supply event-related information such as dates, venue specifics, transportation concerns, exhibitor details, maps, and other event-related details. From Table. 3, it was noted that 'Used technology to buy tickets, make payments online, and reserve seats' (4.38). From Table. 2, 26.3% of respondents stated that the main function of event technology was to buy tickets online and contactless entry and exit. The findings are in line with research by Copans (2020), Pick (2020), and Vario (2019), who noted that technology made participants' lives easier by enabling them to search for information, purchase tickets online, enter events using a contactless swipe, scan QR codes to obtain information, and ask questions live with event organizers.

Objective 2: To evaluate the influence of technology on event attendees' experiences in Oman

Table 3 demonstrated that social media platforms have contributed to increasing enthusiasm for the events (4.36), the latest event technologies have the potential to improve communication between the host and guests (4.29), and the event technologies were liked as they allowed to communicate with friends before, during, and after the event (3.96). The results are consistent with those of previous studies by Heinze et al. (2016), Hendler (2009), Abulibdeh & Zaidan (2017), Lee (2011), Solaris (2018), McKinley (2020), Rogers (2013) and Ryan et al. (2020). Further, the results show that attendees' willingness to attend events increased due to the outstanding quality of content that was presented through user-friendly technologies (4.17), and the newest technologies, like AR, VR, AI, and high-end video and audio devices, contributed to boosting attendees' participation and involvement in the event (4.21). Table 2 demonstrated that, according to the maximum number of respondents (31.4%), enhancing guests' experiences was the primary purpose of technology in events. According to Kruger & Saayman (2017), Capasa et al. (2022), Melo et al. (2022), Ovation Global DMC (2023), and Ryan et al. (2020), technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) in the context of the event industry help organizers enhance users' experiences and keep them up to date by providing various smart access options. These findings and literature support these claims, as event planners use this technology to create unique experiences that can boost consistent attendance and repeat visits.

Table. 6 demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation between the number of events visitors attended and the events they attended in Muscat, Oman that make use of cutting-edge technologies. According to Table. 7, there is a substantial and positive correlation between attendees' repeated attendance at events and the newest technology employed by Muscat event planners. The results are consistent with the literature that Stova (2023), Brooke (2022), Bizzabo Blog Staff (2023), Alex (2020), Vario (2019), and Pick (2020) suggested, including the types of technologies that are currently in use in addition to more recent and advanced systems like mobile payment systems, online registration and ticketing, and engagement technology like polls, apps, and live engagement. In addition, as cell phones improve every year, new technologies are being developed, such as mobile apps for events and live events customized to phones, which will further improve attendees' experiences and happiness. Furthermore, Capasa et al. (2022), Melo et al. (2022), Ovation Global DMC (2023), and Copans (2020) claimed that AI, AR, and VR technologies improve user experience and make them happy all the time.

Conclusion

This study concluded that technology can play an important role in simplifying the planning and execution of events more efficiently and effectively. However, technology has contributed to the abandonment of events that require physical activities such as ticket printing, manually checking attendance, and collecting feedback. Technology adoption makes events more flexible in terms of organizing and managing them. It is positive to see that around 70 percent of respondents attended more than five events in a year, and there was an increase in the number of events annually and, consequently, an increase in the attendance rate. The research also concluded that the benefits of technology in transforming events based on attendees' perspectives are that they used technology to post comments, read others' comments, enquire about the events, and look up information about the events using technology, such as the date, time, place, and contact data. Besides, the

experiences of event attendees in Oman are influenced by technology in several ways. For instance, it made it possible for respondents to learn about the events, search for discounts on coupons and promo codes, and get tickets at a reduced price. Social networking platforms have also increased enthusiasm for these events. Recent technological advancements, such as AR, VR, and AI can help the event sector by boosting experiences, facilitating interactions, and improving effectiveness. There is already evidence of AI innovation across the world, and the events sector is anticipated to be one of the commercial areas where AI and VR have the greatest potential.

Recommendations

From the above results, it can be learned that technology has a significant role in maximizing the events sector in Oman. For this reason, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Considering that 80% of participants still like in-person events, the event planners and the organizers need to determine the types of events that people enjoy and periodically schedule them.
- There is a greater requirement to educate people about event technologies because only 50% of the respondents were familiar with them.
- Event planners must be active on social media and share updated information as the majority of people prefer to use the platforms for event-related information for interaction.
- The mediocre attendees' experience with RFIDs, contactless swipes, QR codes, audience engagement tools such as live polls, and other technologies call for improvement in these areas from event planners.
- It is recommended that event organizing companies allow online payment for tickets and start event mobile apps and event wearable event technologies.
- Wherever possible, the organizer should record events of the highest quality and make them available to the attendees.
- Attendees should have access to technical support via phone, email, social media platforms, live chats, and event apps.
- Event organizers need to determine the reasons for the unhappy respondents and the means for improvements.

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