Technology Use in Meetings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The purpose of this report is to examine how technology helps meetings achieve their goals and objectives. The research focuses on offsite business meetings and incentive travel programs that include at least one overnight stay. Research for this report includes literature review of technology used in meetings and analysis of interviews conducted with meeting planners, venue managers and third party vendors. At the end of this paper is a proposed survey protocol for use by meeting planners to collect views and ascertain the value of technology use in their business meetings and incentive travel programs.

Results from this study is intended to help stakeholders better understand both the positive and negative effects of meeting technology, use that knowledge to improve meetings and ultimately, to align meeting outcomes with meeting goals. The research project has concentrated on technology trends (social media, virtual meetings, mobile applications) in incentive events, seminars and conferences for non-government organizations.

The major findings indicate that despite a wide range of cutting edge technologies evolving on the market, Wi-Fi remains the main concern for the meeting industry because reliable Wi-Fi connection is needed to support the plethora of technologies used in meetings. Research also reveals that current technology, such as social media and mobile applications are not widely adopted in the business meetings and incentive travel programs in the finance and insurance industries mainly due to the security issues and corporate culture; however, there are indications of positive inclination of adoption in the future if these concerns can be addressed.

The virtual meetings, although useful for meetings with a heavy educational and informational
goal, do not support primary goal of human interaction in meetings and cannot replace face-to-face meetings. Overall, the research suggests there is a need for education in the event planner cohort, not only to understand the usefulness of each technology in the context of the meeting goals and objectives, but also to be prepared and have a practical insight into overcoming their associated disadvantages.

The report has several limitations. First, the representation of the stakeholder groups was unevenly distributed; there were more event planners and fewer vendors. Second, there was a gap in academic research in the areas of virtual and interactive meetings as well as attitudes to the use of technology in meetings. This gap supported the significance of conducted research, but at the same time created difficulty in providing a credible background to the discussed issues. Third, the research was focused on finance and insurance industries only and findings cannot be generalized across the meeting industry as a whole.

Essentially this paper is an exploratory study on the use of technology in meetings and is intended to form an early foundation for future research on this topic and its related issues, particularly the limitations of the report points to a few areas that could be potentially interesting to the industry. Future research could involve a comparative analysis of use of technology across different industries and countries, for example financial, medical and automotive industries. It is also suggested to conduct pilot interviews prior to conducting research in order to refine the questions to avoid bias among respondents and provide more accurate information. Additionally, future research may focus specifically on virtual meeting, social media and mobile apps rather than an overview of meeting technology as this paper has
done. Finally, it is suggested for future research to evaluate the value derived from incentive travel programs and determines the return on investment on this specific type of meetings.
INTRODUCTION
Technology has changed the way mankind goes about life, in ways previously never imagined possible. Innovation and creativity has brought about the development of newer, faster and more effective tools to carry out all sorts of tasks in sectors and specializations as diverse as medical, finance, construction, publication, manufacturing, marketing, mining, aviation, farming, telecommunication, hospitality and tourism. Such change has been rapid over the decades, and although change does not occur uniformly across industries nor geographical areas, it is fairly safe to say that there are currently few facets of life that remain completely untouched by the progress of technology, and that is especially true in a developed country like the United States of America.

Unsurprisingly, communication and interaction, which is a core human activity, has also seen a paradigm shift as a result of technology, and business meetings, which are essentially about communication and interaction in the work arena, have been similarly affected. Business meetings in the U.S. have now evolved to a stage where meeting technology tools have the potential to revolutionize the industry. Generally, most organizations consider meetings as an integral part to their ongoing viability and that is largely why meetings industry is one of the largest economic contributors to the country. The meetings industry is characterized by the “Three Highs—high growth potential, high added-value, and highly beneficial innovations”; the “Three Larges—large output, large opportunities for employment, and large industry associations” and the “Three Advantages—advantage over other industries in human resources, technological know-how, and the efficient utilization of assets” ("Meetings, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition” 1). According to the International Congress and Convention
Association (ICCA), the United States was the top ranked country hosting 759 out of a total 10,070 regularly rotating international association meetings, attracting 563,830 participants in 2011 (“Economic Significance” 20-23).

The purpose of this report is to examine how technology helps meetings achieve their goals and objectives. The research focuses on offsite business meetings and incentive travel programs that include at least one overnight stay. Research for this report includes literature review of technology used in meetings and analysis of interviews conducted with meeting planners, venue managers and third party vendors. At the end of this paper is a proposed survey protocol for use by meeting planners to collect views and ascertain the value of technology use in their business meetings and incentive travel programs.

The research has four key steps: determining the available technology for meetings and incentive travel programs and its purposes; evaluating the impacts of technology on meetings and group incentive travel; assessing the impact against the stated meeting goals, and finally, determining ways in which the effectiveness of technology applied in is measured. In answering the above questions, the following questions were considered:

- To what extent does the purpose of meetings and incentive travel programs affect the choice of technologies being used? What other factors affect the decision of application?
- How has the use of technology changed over the last ten years?
• What are the trends in technology use in offsite business meetings and incentive travel programs and which emerging ones will lead to changes in meetings and incentive travel programs over the next five to ten years?

Results from this study is intended to help stakeholders better understand both the positive and negative effects of meeting technology, use that knowledge to improve meetings and ultimately, to align meeting outcomes with meeting goals. The research project has concentrated on technology trends (social media, teleconferencing, videoconferencing and web conferencing) in incentive events, seminars and conferences for non-government organizations.
PART I

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Statistics clearly underscore the importance of the meetings industry as an important economic generator for the country. A Price Waterhouse Coopers study revealed that in 2009, nearly 1.8 million meetings took place in the U.S, of which 25 percent conventions, 12 percent trade shows, 4 percent incentive meetings with the remaining 7 percent marked as others (“Economic Significance” 5). These meetings were attended by 205 million participants, supporting 6.3 million jobs, total industry output reached US$907 billion of which US$263 billion was direct spending (“Economic Significance” 5). Of the 1.8 million meetings held, corporate/business meetings accounted for 1.2 million with over 107 million participants, while incentive meetings accounted for 66,000 with 8.2 million participants (Kovaleski & Wentworth 15). On average, meetings generated $1,290 in spending per participants, with incentive meetings generating the highest spending per attendee 1,620 (Kovaleski & Wentworth 15). A report published by PCMA also highlighted that although the industry’s contribution accounted for less than 1 percent of GDP, it ranked ahead of several high profile industries such as the car manufacturing industry and air transportation both in GDP and jobs generated (“Economic Significance” 8-9). Furthermore, according to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the U.S was the top ranked country hosting 759 out of a total 10,070 regularly rotating international association meetings, attracting 563,830 participants in 2011 (20-23).
Apart from the general development of technology at all levels of society, the recent economic turbulence has stimulated a substantially greater interest in meeting innovations that could bring advantages such as an increase of productivity, reduction in long term costs, improvement of communication and expansion of the meeting footprint (Davidson and Cope 17). However, not all technologies are necessarily beneficial to every meeting and since making use of them requires a substantial investment of both time and capital, the research promises to be helpful for the industry in understanding what areas of technology are worth pursuing, particularly in light of overall meeting goals (Angeletti 181).

This research was done in collaboration with Incentive Research Foundation, a private not-for-profit foundation that funds research studies and develops products serving all segments of the global incentive industry. The foundation not only provided information but also facilitated access to several meeting planners and sponsors for the purposes of research interviews. The research is based on interviews with venue operators, third party vendors as well as planners, some of whom have expressed their interest in the findings of this research. In conjunction with the interviews, extensive exploration of existing research was used to identify key ideas to further inform the current research being conducted.
LITERATURE REVIEW
The literature review provides an overview of the meetings and incentive travel program industry by establishing basic definitions and setting the stage for the scope of the work to be presented in this paper. It analyzes scholarly and trade findings on important topics such as meeting technology, the AIG Effect, incentive events, practices of technology adoption, and measurement of effectiveness of meetings. Finally, a brief analysis of the gaps and patterns of the body of work reviewed is conducted to determine the possibility of future research.

Definitions
The general definition of meeting is “a gathering of three or more people who agree to assemble for a purpose ostensibly related to the functioning of an organization or group” (Schwartzman 61). Business meetings normally take place for individuals gather to share information, debate or deliberate on issues to arrive at decisions, while incentive travel programs are developed to reward employees who have invested extra efforts at work to achieve established goals. Although the link between meetings and profit for a business entity cannot always be clearly delineated, most organizations consider meetings an integral part of doing business because meetings can be used to interact with existing customers, engage potential customers, network and enhance human capital (“Return on Investment” 8). The term “Meetings Industry” encompasses the organization, promotion, sales, delivery of events for corporate, association and government meetings, incentive events, seminars, congresses, conferences, conventions, events, technical visits, exhibitions and fairs (“Measuring” 18), which essentially covers the entire spectrum of business meetings within the scope of this research. Although incentive events are a subset of business meetings, this research highlights the distinction between incentive travel and the other types of business meetings, because unlike
the other business meetings, a leisure tourism format is used to achieve business goals in incentive events (Davidson and Cope 158).

A plethora of innovations have been developed for business meetings and incentive events, mainly in the sphere of information and communication technology. The paper primarily focused on three emerging technological tools; namely virtual meetings, social media and mobile applications, which have in the recent few years sparked an increase in interest and is expected to lead to changes in the industry over the next five to ten years. Their effectiveness and value within the industry is less understood and warrants further research, compared to technological tools such as automated RFPs and online registrations, which already have received broad acceptance due to their obvious functionality and efficiencies (Davidson and Cope 134).

In the context of this research, there are three important and distinct groups – the meeting planners, the supplier or venue managers, and the attendees. The initiators of the meeting event, who also control the budget, will be referred to as meeting owners and the individuals employed to plan, design and execute the events will be referred to as meeting planners, even though they both often belong to the same organization and form part of the demand equation in the meetings industry (Davidson and Cope 76, Swarbrooke and Horner 39). A wide range of suppliers offer all sorts of services for meetings. Key supplier groups are venues and smaller players such as equipment rental companies, technology vendors, consultants and production companies (Davidson and Cope 88, Swarbrooke and Horner 49-54). There are a huge number of intermediaries comprising destination management companies, travel agencies, destination
marketing organizations, among others on both the demand and supply side who provide valuable services to either party (Davidson and Cope 115-118, Swarbrooke and Horner 41).

Finally, the attendees, essentially the group of stakeholders to whom the meeting owners wish to reach out to educate, brainstorm with, sell to, communicate ideas, create networking opportunities, reward or motivate performance.

Stakeholders' agendas and values are not always aligned and sometimes are in direct conflict with each other (Vanneste 6). For instance, certain technology may benefit the meeting owner and the venue operator, but constitutes a threat to the intermediaries by reducing the need for their services (Swarbrooke and Horner 228). It is therefore necessary to clarify that this research ultimately judges the effectiveness of the meeting technology from the perspective of the meeting owners as they are the reason why the meeting is held in the first place. Because meeting planners typically report to the meeting owner, it is expected that their agenda will be largely subordinate to that of the meeting owner.

**Incentive Events**
The Society of Incentive and Travel Executives defines incentive travel programs as programs developed to motivate employees “to achieve extraordinary goals by awarding participants a travel prize upon their attainment of their share of the uncommon goals” (www.siteglobal.com 17 Nov 2012). The recipients of the incentive travel award can be external distributors or employees, and attendees qualify based on a specific goal set by the company or a more subjective criterion of performance (Severt & Breiter) Goals of such incentive travel meetings include stimulating sales, enhancing productivity and profitability, boosting morale and
company loyalty and reducing absenteeism (Sheldon 20). Attendees are motivated by both the incentive travel award they can earn and the recognition afforded to them by the corporate leaders when they participate in the travel event, as well as by the opportunity to network with other high performers and share best practices (www.meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012).

The economic instability of the last four years negatively impacted the incentive travel and business meeting industries. Scholars agree that the incentive travel business has faced many challenges and has had to change because of the recent economic recession (Formica and Goldblatt 13, Severt and Breiter 100). Studies show that the line between incentive travel and meetings is blurring; according to preliminary findings from joint research conducted by Corporate Meetings and Incentives and the IRF, tax regulations and pressures from the soft economy have encouraged many planners to introduce and increase business content within incentive travel programs (Van Dyke qtd www.meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012) therefore changing the nature of the incentive travel program. It is believed that over a twenty-five percent of incentive travel planners now have more than 40 percent of their events dedicated to business meetings rather than incentive travel which shows the growing trend of owners incorporating some business or education aspect in what was originally a purely leisure/reward type of event. (Scofidio qtd meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012).

To correct public misconception about incentive travel programs, O'Malley found that organizations start to exhibit a higher level of transparency to the public and make efforts to track and report the business value of incentive travel programs, especially by investing in
Return on Investment ("ROI") measurements (meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012). Interestingly, despite the assertion that greater justification for meetings is needed in the current environment, only 20 percent of respondents in a joint 2012 Incentive Travel Trends Survey conducted by the Incentive Research Foundation and Corporate Meetings & Incentives said they were required to provide any type of program ROI for their trips (Van Dyke & Scofidio qtd meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012), which is substantially higher than the ROI Institutes’ 5-10 percent guideline. The contradiction in research suggests that while organizations may want to measure effectiveness in terms of Return on Investment, budget concerns and the identifying benchmarks makes measurement difficult.

The AIG Effect
One of the more iconic incidents in the recent history of the meetings industry in the U.S. is known as the AIG Effect, which will be discussed in the next section. Days after being bailed out by the Federal Reserve to the tune of $85 billion dollars, American International Group (AIG) held an incentive event for about 70 top-selling insurance agents and a few AIG executives at the five-star St. Regis Resort Monarch Beach in California in September 2008 which reportedly cost $443,000. When the press made this information public, AIG was harshly criticized and forced to cancel all junkets or benefits which were not deemed to be strictly justified by legitimate business needs, including more than 160 conferences and events, some exceeding more than $750,000 per event (Jakobson 1). The impact of these cancellations was seen throughout the meeting industry: “American International Group didn’t just drive the world financial system to the brink of collapse; it also tanked the luxury corporate travel market” (Lewis 1). Wells Fargo was also accused by media and taxpayers of misusing the $25 billion
received from the US Department of Treasury after planning an employee recognition event in Las Vegas, which lead the company to cancel the trip (Aufferman 9). In the same vein, other companies including General Motor, Bank of America, JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley and American Express canceled comparable trips due to either the fear of media criticism or negative public sentiment (Bell 12). The alleged tendency of corporations to cut down on lavish expenditures and luxuries in areas like travel and meetings to avoid appearing wasteful in times of economic downturn which was sparked by some practices of the insurance giant American International Group was thereafter known as the AIG Effect.

Consequently, the US government placed regulations and policies that included restrictions on conferences and events for companies who received emergency financial assistance. These actions in turn compelled companies to make changes to their travel policies, which cover incentive events, other meetings and employee travel (Bell 12). Political and media pressure was so strong that even companies that did not receive any government funding felt pressured to cancel group travel and make changes to their travel policies. A National Business Travel Association reported that in the first quarter of 2009, 86 percent of the 119 corporate managers surveyed confirmed travel cuts while 47 percent of the respondents indicated austerity measures were similarly applied to incentive travel (www.meetingsnet.com 9 Dec 2012). Consequently, it became obvious that the entire meetings industry, were affected by that one incident, with significant financial repercussions to upscale hotels and resorts in particular. As a result of the AIG Effect, Aufferman estimated $1 billion worth of conferences were cancelled in the first two month of 2009 alone, with a massive 200,000 travel–related
jobs lost in the last quarter of 2008 after the incident. In a survey conducted by the IRF, 37 percent of respondents canceled group incentive travel programs in 2009, though this number has reduced to 18 percent and 13 percent in 2010 and 2011 respectively (www.meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012) as the economy saw some rebound.

**Measurement of the Effectiveness of Meetings**

Most meetings have a core goal and several other secondary objectives. The type of meeting will obviously determine meeting goals; for instance, seminars tend to focus on learning and skills development, product launches on raising awareness, sales conferences on networking and incentive travel programs on rewarding and motivating (Swarbrooke and Horner 19). The matrix below is taken from an Oxford Economics study, which shows the broad goals of a sampling of meetings (“Return on Investment” 5).

**Table 1- Trip Benefit/ Type Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRIP TYPE</th>
<th>Keeping Customers</th>
<th>Converting Prospects</th>
<th>Relational Networking</th>
<th>Investing in People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer visits</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and marketing</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee training</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences, conventions</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade shows, exhibitions</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive and reward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oxford Economics, 2012

Research suggests that the effectiveness of a meeting is judged differently across stakeholder groups; for instance the meeting planner may be more concerned with how well the meeting functioned, with particular reference to the logistical aspects, while participants may pay more
attention to the preparedness of the speaker and the comfort of the venue, and senior management may consider a meeting to be successful if participants gained knowledge and motivation as a result of the meeting (Hinkin and Tracey 19). On the other hand, Nichols argued that a meeting planner adjusts his/her actions and behavior according to the expectations of the executive to which he or she reports (128). Although the perspective of the meeting planner or meeting owner is important, in the end, the effectiveness of the meetings remains highly dependent on whether the attendees had a positive experience (Vanneste 8). Yet, interestingly, Joppe and Martin found that while incentive travel planners focused on indicators such as increased revenues and strengthened loyalty, attendees merely adjusted their efforts to reach the qualifying requirements for the next incentive trip opportunity because they enjoy the reward associated with the incentive travel program (14).

However, Vatner concludes that meeting departments were seen as “cost centers”, not “value-adders” (qtd. in L. Davis 6). To prove the value of meetings to the organizations, meeting professionals are under pressure to produce successful meetings that impact a company’s strategic direction (L. Davis 6). Therefore, there is a demand for an evaluation methodology that assesses whether the business objectives of the meetings are met, and the degree to which they have been fulfilled (Phillips 692, O’Neil 55).

To evaluate the effectiveness of meetings, the leading industry association, Meeting Professional International (“MPI”), adopted the first standardized return on investment model in 2004 based on the six-level Phillips model and adapted it for practical application in the
meetings industry (L. Davis 6). Jack Phillips developed his model as a follow-on of the 4-level Kirkpatrick training measurement to convert benefits of the meeting to a monetary value and demonstrate its impact on an organization’s bottom line (Phillips 493). The six levels of measurement in the ROI process are inputs, reactions, learning, application, impact and return on investment. Level zero “inputs” simply involves keeping track of the meetings and events, registered and actual attendees, press coverage, etc. This is followed by level one “reactions” where the satisfaction with experience and content of the meetings or events is gauged. Next in line is level two “learning”, for instance, indicators to appraise what people learned in the events or meetings, attitude changes and contacts made through networking, which may be assessed by means of a quiz or a survey. Level three “application” refers to estimating the actual use of the information, knowledge and skills that the meeting or event intended to impart. Level four “impact” measures changes in business impact such as work output, quality and time saved and finally, the highest level five “return on investment” compares the monetary benefits of the business impact (determined in level four) to the cost of the events or meetings.

According to Amer, the difference between the Phillips model and other evaluation models is the “5th level”, where the monetary value for ROI is calculated (qtd. in L. Davis 7). The whole process follows four steps: evaluation and planning, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Phillips created a process to estimate the realistic intangibles and to isolate the effects of the meeting, complementing and enhancing the previously developed models (L. Davis 6; “Mastering Measurement: The Critical Performance Elements of Incentive Design” 17;
Phillips 714). Formica and Goldblatt (38) acknowledged that measuring success through a
financial formula is the most effective method for the justification of meetings effectiveness,
but Severt and Breiter showed that the data required in that process of calculation can be very
complex to obtain and process (39).

Other performance indicators identified include improved relationships with suppliers,
perceptions, increased client demand, retained business, company growth; however, it is
almost impossible to say with any great certainty that the results were achieved because of a
meeting (Formica and Goldblatt 38). Regardless of the type of indicator used, there are
immense difficulties in proving a direct causal effect between meetings and the outcome;
therefore, in some cases, as long as numeric targets dealing such as sales, revenue, market
share set by the company are achieved or surpassed, the meeting is still considered a success
(Joppe and Martin 14). Due to the complexity and lack of know-how involved in measuring the
higher levels, most evaluation processes only reach to level 1, reaction, satisfaction, and
planned action), sometimes level 2, skills and knowledge learned (L. Davis 18, O’Neil 53).

Literature points out that the major obstacle to calculating meetings ROI is to establish specific
and measurable objectives (Joppe and Martin 8, O’Neil 59). However, the ROI equation
measures only tangible aspects of the incentive travel program, disregarding the intangible
benefits, such as increase in morale and loyalty because of a well-packaged and executed
program (Formica and Goldblatt 38). Furthermore, due to the cost, time and high level of detail
required in a level 5 ROI measurement, Pulliam and Phillips suggest only 5-10% of programs
need such a comprehensive assessment (qtd. in L. Davis 18; “Mastering Measurement” 17). In other words, only the most important, expensive or strategic programs warrants the strategic evaluation outcomes that level 5 measurement proffers.

In summary, while there exists methods of measuring the effectiveness of meetings, aside from the first three levels, the data required to calculate are challenging to obtain and heavily assumption based. Even then, it is impossible to demonstrate a causal relationship between the meeting and its goals. Therefore most meeting planners are satisfied with establishing a correlation, however weak, or remain at the lower levels of meeting measurement.

A more in-depth understanding of the state of technology use in the meetings industry is best examined by reviewing the history and evolution in the next section, to set the stage for the new and emerging technology that is presented in the later part of the literature review.

**Evolution of Technology in the Meetings Industry**
Incredible technological changes have taken place in the past three decades. In 1980, many event registration companies such as Galaxy Information Services, CompuSystems, and Registration Control Systems began providing basic computerized badge production and lead retrieval via embossed plastic "credit" cards to the trade show industry Galaxy also offered the first computerized on-site registration by using 12 registration stations transmitting over one 1,200-baud modem, which removed the need for an on-site mainframe computer. The 1981 release of MeetingPro introduced the first database software for the meeting industry that
enabled personalized confirmation letters, big-print name badges, accurate attendance lists, and basic market tracking. (Ball “1980-2012” 1-2)

In 1982, the sale of US$ 250,000 video conference systems by Compression Labs revolutionized the way meetings were held. In 1983, Eric Orkin launched Delphi Management Systems (later renamed New Market Software in 1985), the first comprehensive meetings and group sales, marketing, and catering software for the hospitality industry. In 1987, Microsoft released PowerPoint 1.0 for the Mac, which provided only black-and-white images and had only one transition. In 2000, the first virtual trade show, ExpoExchange, was held in which SpotMe introduced its mobile networking device in London, allowing attendees to see pictures and contact information of people who attended. In 2003, Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) was used in more than 6,000 hotels. In 2007, Apple introduced the iPhone and 3 years later, the iPad. In 2010, Skype provided high-definition video conferencing, which gave planners the ability to broadcast high quality video signal for free at events. And now apple face time  Mobile applications specifically designed for events and trade shows grew tremendously, with hundreds of new companies providing emerging services (Ball, “1980-2012” 1-2).

Technology continues to change the way people interact at all levels, from the social to the business environment, and this phenomena is also observed in the meetings industry,. Because certain technological advances present both opportunities and threats to the industry, how the industry chooses to views and deal with these issues will be critical (Weber and Ladkin 48, Lyon and Larsen qtd Julsrud, Hjorthol and Denstadli 396, Davidson and Cope 133).
In the past, content in meetings was typically delivered by flip charts or traditional chalk boards with the aid of paper handouts, however today information is delivered through sleek PowerPoint presentations. Technology that did not even exist a few years ago is revolutionizing the way conferences, meetings and events happen today, for instance, planners can add a whole layer of networking and connectivity before and during the meeting by utilizing social media tools and extend the meeting through attendee online communities long after the actual event is over (Grant qtd in Pelletier 2). The wide majority of properties have also added wireless networks to their existing systems, providing an entirely new set of capabilities for the event attendee, exhibitor and meeting planner. With a sufficient amount of bandwidth, any access point can handle all machines including smartphones, laptops, tablets, badge and card readers and web conferencing that might benefit from network access,. (Angeletti 183). Furthermore, many hotels and venues are investing large amount of money to equip their convention rooms with state of the art technology that give their clients the option of either face-to-face meetings or hybrid meetings (Rock 40). At the same time, meeting planners, particularly for their big events, are also turning to customized websites to disseminate program information, conference material, travel details and integrating online registrations software in as well (Lee and Back 415, Davidson and Cope 178).

Interestingly, an expert panel from the United Kingdom (“U.K”) pointed that inadequate technology support from technology suppliers has had a negative impact on quality of services provided by the venues in that country, and together with the substantial capital cost, this
situation creates a reluctance, for venues with lesser financial resources, to install state-of-the-art technology (Weber and Ladkin 56, Rock 42). Moreover, the pace of technological change is rapid, and there is a risk that investments may be rendered obsolete quickly, causing organizations to be cautious in jumping in the bandwagon (Swarbrooke and Horner 228). Finally, the level of service and technology development at a destination may determine if corporate incentive attendees will be attracted (Xiang and Formica 6).

A survey done by the American Incentive, Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition on American based buyers and sellers revealed that three of the top technologies were social media, mobile applications and virtual meetings (“IBTM” 7). The following sections analyzes existing literature review to provide greater depth to these three technologies.

**Virtual Meetings**
Remote meetings incorporate innovations that allow a vastly different experience of long distance communication. Virtual meetings have progressed from simple telephone conferencing to video-conferencing to web conferencing using channels such as Skype, live webcasts and even three-dimensional virtual meetings with holographic avatar participants (Julsrud, Hjorthol and Denstadli 398, Litvin 3). The fear of being criticized by the public and the economic downturn has encouraged the use of teleconferencing, videoconferencing and other forms of virtual meetings (Pizam 1). At the same time, the growth of virtual meetings has also contributed to audiences' increasing familiarity with online platforms, maturation of virtual technology and availability of higher bandwidth (Pearlman and Gates 254). The incorporation of technology into meetings was a welcome solution that resulted not only in cost savings for
organizations but also a positive environmental impact (Arnfalk and Kogg 866). Moreover, virtual meetings have resulted in an expanded market to reach and increase attendance (Julsrud, Hjorthol and Denstadli 399).

By using virtual meetings, Accenture, a technology consulting firm, avoided 240 international trips as well as 120 domestic flights in one month with estimated annual savings of millions of dollars while Cisco saved $100 million in yearly travel costs and reduced its greenhouse gas emission from air travel by 10% in 2008 (Lohr 1). A manager at Subaru of America claimed that by conducting training sessions virtually, 2,500 people were reached at a cost of 75 cents per person instead of 220 people at a cost of $300 per person. (Lohr 1). Arnfalk and Kogg’s examination of shifting from business travel to virtual meetings reveals that virtual communication is considered more appropriate for certain type of meetings, that involve dissemination of information rather than discussion or brainstorming, those with a low focus on networking, and meetings that are called at short notice, of a short duration and requiring a low number of attendees (867).

Virtual meetings were utilized by 34 percent of sellers and 26 percent of buyers according to a survey of industry professionals conducted in the Spring of 2012 (“IBTM” 7). A Forbes Insight survey reported that 59 percent of the respondents had increased their use of virtual meetings, suggesting that many companies turned to technology for a cost-friendlier meeting alternative, but an overwhelming 87 percent still considered the tangible business benefits of face-to-face meetings outweighed the time and cost savings of virtual meetings (Rizy et al 2,5).
However, while virtual communication is easily used in business meetings, its implementation in incentive programs is almost impossible because the goal of any incentive program is essentially to reward high performance with the travel experience, and create networking opportunities between attendees and executives. Surprisingly, meetingsnet.com found that 12 percent of respondents are augmenting their incentive meetings with virtual technologies (Van Dyke and Scofidio 1). In light of the severe economic recession which reportedly caused many corporations to make incentive events include business elements such as training or sales strategy, it is likely that virtual technologies were used to broadcast the business sessions to other remote participants who would benefit from them. Many scholars suggest that fears that virtual meetings will replace the traditional meetings were unfounded since in person networking is still regarded as essential and emerging technology seen as complementary (Weber and Ladkin 57; Rizy et al 2, Arnfalk and Kogg 862; Pizham 1).

While videoconferencing, teleconferencing and web conferencing are widely used by companies as internal communication, social media is mostly used to communicate with customers or distributors.

Social Media
Social media, sometimes interchangeably used with the term user-generated communication, currently represents a widespread source of information on the internet and the tools and strategies that companies use to communicate with their consumers has changed as a result (Marigold qtd in Michaelidou 1153). Social media covers a wide range of platforms including wikis, blogs and virtual worlds, but social media typically refers to social networking sites or
content sharing communities such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest and YouTube (Kaplan and Haenlein 62-64). McKinsey Global Research estimated that there are 1.5 billion members of social communities globally, with 80% of them regularly interacting on social networks, consuming 20 percent of their online time and increasingly on mobile devices (Chui et al. vii). Although social networking sites began as havens for teenagers and college students, baby boomers are reportedly now the fastest growing demographic group and beyond that, a shift from strictly personal use to a mixture of personal and professional use has been observed over the last five years (“Using Social” 2), employers have become more accepting of social media for business use and a larger number of organizations have established dedicated social media policies in an formal effort to grapple with the issues of confidentiality, privacy and monitoring presented by this new medium. (“Workplace” 3-4).

The proliferation of mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets has led to an even deeper entrenchment of social media in society (Kaplan and Haenlein 67). Sheng found that “by extending computing and internet into the wireless medium, mobile technology allows users to have anytime anywhere access to information and applications, which provides greater flexibility in communication, collaboration and information sharing” (270). Barnes further found that organizations can leverage the trend of consumer use of mobile technology to extract great strategic value (qtd in Sheng 273).

With all these developments, coupled with more than 100 million subscribers in the U.S. it is no surprise that the use of social media engagement tools, particularly on mobile applications,
interest meeting professionals. A shift to the Information Age emphasizes continuous exchange of information among all participants as attendees are no longer satisfied to sit passively listening to a presenter (Lee 274). Another development that may push planners up the adoption curve is the integration of online registration systems by some industry-specific private label social networking platforms such as Jot and Zerista (Harris 1).

However, most planners are at a loss as to whether social media has a part to play in their organization's events, how to use it or the investment needed (Pelletier 1). Dreyer, a web consultant, contends that social media opens up value-added informal and peer-to-peer learning channels for attendees and expands that experience to online networks of the attendees who were not at the meeting (qtd in Pelletier 1). On the other hand, skeptics argue that social networking diminishes the value of personal networks, a top reason for meetings (Feiertag qtd in Lee 276). On the other hand, Barrett claimed that social media can create a social network that facilitates relevant and valuable interactions extending beyond the physical meeting days (22). It was also asserted that the medium also offers significant marketing potential - - not just to increase attendance for future events from positive word-of-mouth but even for the upcoming event by manufacturing pre-event buzz and getting attendees engaged ahead of time (Wright 1).

Because social media is a 2-way communication tool, feedback from attendees can be speedily handled, especial in neutralizing the impact of negative comments (Marcus qtd in Wright 2). Social media is a two-edged sword since it hands over control of information to users, hence
meeting planners need to recognize its benefits and learn to manage ancillary problems ("The Future" 4, Barrett 69). Interestingly, Maritz pointed out that even if meeting planners do not incorporate social media into their meetings, there is a high chance that the informal online communities being formed, will create pressure for the planner to do it officially so that they may also participate in the conversation ("The Future" 3). Experts also warn that participation in online social spaces tend to follow the 1:9:90 rule where 1 percent create content; 9 percent interact with that content through commenting, sharing, rating, or reviewing it; and 90 percent are spectators ("Add Social Media" 33). Therefore meeting professionals new to using social media in meetings may be frustrated at the apparent lack of engagement when it is actually typical ("Add Social Media to Your Meeting"). Ultimately the biggest challenge in applying social media successfully is for planners to know their audience, particularly if it is not a homogenous group of attendees but one with diverse communication, learning and interaction style ("The Future" 7).

In contrast to virtual meetings, social media is of greater use or appeal to planners of incentive programs, probably because the social nature of the incentive event matches the social nature of the medium. A survey of planners conducted by www.meetingsnet.com found that a third of the respondents use social media to promote their incentive programs and 21 percent intend to use it the next year (www.meetingsnet.com 17 Nov 2012). A wider survey of the industry reveals that social media was being used as communication tools before, during and after meetings by 82 percent of buyers and 74 percent of sellers ("IBTM" 7).
As the statistics show, there are varying rates of acceptance of different technology tools; there are numerous reasons and industry faces the challenge of extracting the most out of all available and useful technology. The following section will explore technology acceptance issues.

**Issues Regarding Technology Acceptance**

Developments relating to more functional aspects of meetings including audiovisual systems, simultaneous interpretation systems, lighting systems and projection facilities have been easily embraced by the industry. However, Pearlman and Gates found that information and communication technology solutions were less welcomed traditionally because the meetings industry touted itself as “high touch” as opposed to “high tech”. However, some forward-thinking companies have demonstrated by example that “high tech” and “high touch” are not mutually exclusive (48). While there is increasing interest to integrate more advanced technology into the industry, it is clear that adoption occurs on an innovation-specific basis because each form of technology is evaluated on its own merits. For each technological innovation to be fully embraced by the meetings industry, the adoption has to occur at several levels; the meeting planner, the meeting owner, the attendee as well as the meeting planners’ perception of their attendee profile. Such adoption can be influenced by many variables; on an individual level, these factors may include demographic profiles, personal characteristics and preferences, knowledge and education, while at an organizational level, influences may be attributed to corporate culture, hierarchy and business priorities and philosophy, etc.
Hence, it is worthwhile to briefly examine the body of literature that deals with the acceptance of new products or change to understand better the reasons for the pace of technology adoption in the meetings industry.

**Models of Technology Adoption**

The “Diffusion of Innovation” is a theory of how, why and at what rate new ideas and technology spreads through cultures. In this theory, Rogers suggested that the process of decision-making on any innovation encompasses the five stages of: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption, which occur through a series of communication channels over a period of time among the members of a similar social system (11-34). He also created a classification of individuals on the basis of their innovative-ness resulted in the now popular bell shaped adoption curve (see below Figure). Several scholars and marketers have further developed Rogers’ concepts, by assigning the classifications with psychographic and technographic profiles and applications of marketing tactics on each group. Sources More interestingly, Moore suggested that the 16% level was big leap of faith that divided the early adopters from the more cautious early majority, in other words, the stage where an innovation becomes mainstream in a particular system or culture (63).

Maloney’s 16 percent rule, which states that once a technology has reached the 16 percent acceptance level, the way to interest the early majority to adopt is to revise its marketing messaging from one of scarcity to one based on social proof incomplete sentence (www.innovateordie.com.au 14Nov2012). The idea may shed light on the sometimes half hearted wait-and-see attitude of the 'early majority' group and may also explain why new
innovations are constantly being developed – the ‘innovators’ group tends to pride itself – group is an it on being the rare few to recognize the value of new products, and are therefore look for new and better ideas. Figure 1 illustrates graphically the various theories on innovation diffusion.

**Figure 1. Adoption of Technology Curve**

Analyzing the causes of acceptance or rejection of technology, Davis found that it was dependent on two key variables; one, perceived usefulness, a positive impact on the job and two, perceived ease of use, the difficulty in adoption (F. Davis 333). This Technology Acceptance Model (“TAM”), has been acknowledged as a useful basic theory. In investigating the Technology Acceptance Model for smartphones, Kim found statistical support for two
additional constructs: perceived cost savings and company willingness to fund and job relevance, experience to the model (390-391). Another scholar expanded Davis’ Technology Acceptance Model in the context of social media and determined that prior experience in using the technology had a positive correlation with perceived ease of use while the age of meeting professionals had an inverse relationship with the willingness to use the technology (Lee 282).

Figure 2: Expanded Technology Model

![Technology Acceptance Model Diagram]

Source: Sang Hyun Kim “Moderating effects of Job Relevance and Experience on mobile wireless technology acceptance: Adoption of a smartphone by individuals”

While the literature review examined did not turn up any explicit mention, corporate culture or management hierarchy plays a significant part in technological adoption at the workplace.
There is plenty of literature on organizational change and corporate culture dating as far back as the seventies and eighties,

**Corporate Culture**
Organization cultures can constitute a serious barrier for the introduction of new technology and “new ways of meeting” (Arnfalk and Kogg 867). The implementation or even the introduction of technology in company meetings in a large part depends on the attitude and encouragement of senior management. Even though meeting planners can make suggestions, in many cases, the final meeting decisions are made by the executives; and since the executives are responsible for the budget, it is therefore possible that management may inadvertently exert influence over the preference, attitudes and values of their employees. (Chapman 46).

According to Rizy et. al. “business executives overwhelmingly agree that face to face meeting are not only preferable but necessary for building deeper, more profitable bonds with clients and business partners and maintaining productive relationships with co-workers” (2). In companies where the management strongly supports face-to-face meetings, policies reflect this attitude. The same logic is applied when the management is pro-virtual meetings (Arnfalk and Kogg 869). Ironically, Casanova, Kim and Morrison found that executives often do not take the advice of meetings planners as they do not acknowledge the value of meeting planners' input (22); on the other hand, Chapman argued that it was due to a lack of persuasive skills from meeting planners because 55 percent of meeting planners have regular interactions with executives therefore there are ample opportunities for the views and ideas of planners to be heard (47).
Conclusion
The literature review shows that technology in meetings faces a number of key challenges. First, technology is constantly being developed and at an increasing pace, so it is easy to be overwhelmed by the number of new applications, new mobile hardware and new mobile operating systems that continually appear (Otsuka, “Judgment Day” 2012; Shapiro, “Multimedia Apps” 2011). Second, so that the perceived usefulness and ease of use of adoption technology is correctly addressed, regular re-education and training of staff is needed, which will determine the willingness of parties to make the costly investments of technology (Telford). Finally, too often technology is applied for its own sake without really understanding whether it is appropriate to solving the problem in hand, which has the risk of complicating situations and therefore potentially failing (www.internationalmeetingsreview.com 6 Oct 2012). Ultimately what is crucial to integrating technology into meetings successfully, is that meeting planners understand their audience (Lee 276), establish goals and objectives of the event at the onset and articulate what they hope to achieve by its use (www.internationalmeetingsreview.com 6 Oct 2012; Angeletti 181).

The literature review uncovered only a handful of articles that dealt with virtual and interactive meetings (Pearlman 250, Ball “How To” 2, “The Case for Face-to-Face” 2-5) and attitudes to the technology associated with meetings (Fenich 53). The other research focused either on meetings or technology, though certain research studies on the meetings industry did mention technology used but in passing (Davidson and Cope 17, Lee 271, Vanucci 23, Weber 28, Munter 80). On the other hand, trade publications, blogs and technology commentaries (www.successfulmeetings.com 23 Sep 2012, www.mpiweb.org 21 Oct 2012,
www.meetingsnet.com 26 Nov 2012) yielded more pertinent insights in discussions of current issues that evolved in response to the industry’s needs. However these articles were mainly opinion pieces and lacked depth and the robustness of a peer review.

To fill the gap in the current literature, the section on findings focused on major themes identified such as adoption of technology in meetings industry, methods employed to measure the effectiveness of meetings and technology used in meetings, types of technology that are used in meetings, and issues associated with meeting technologies. The analysis of these findings provided insights to the extent of technology adoption in meetings industry, and how technology has impacted off-site business meetings and incentive travel programs, particularly in finance and insurance industry, in achieving goals and objectives.
RESEARCH METHODS
While all of the sources from the scholarly, trade and technical publications form valuable background for this study, a gap in the literature was identified with reference to the issue of whether technology enhances or detracts from the quality of business meetings and incentive events, and whether and how the effectiveness of technological applications to meetings can be measured. Considering that the project represents an exploratory area of qualitative research, it was deemed most appropriate to utilize semi-structured interviews to gather as much information, uncover key issues, understand the context and depth of the subject matter, and produce new insights.

This research narrowed the target set of interviewees to three broad stakeholder groups: planners, venue operators and third party vendors. A non-probability purposive sampling for the interviews was selected. Individuals with extensive expertise in meetings and events by virtue of holding senior positions in their organizations were identified and selected. The “planner group”, which had the largest number of respondents, was mainly made up of executive planners in financial services, insurance and hospitality sectors, who have extensive experience with planning business meetings and incentive trips. Venue operators with a business mix that focused on business meetings or incentive events were selected. Third party vendors primarily consisted of technical consultants out sourced by the planners for meetings and events. All of the respondents are from organizations based in the United States of America.
Letters seeking permission for interviews were electronically mailed to the identified respondents, setting out clearly the object and scope of the research, and seeking their consent to be interviewed. A sample of the permission letter is attached as Appendix A.

A basic version of the interview protocol was drafted and then tailored to suit each of the three stakeholder groups. There were core questions that all three types of interview protocol had in common, and others that were specific to one or two stakeholder groups only. Questions included the respondents’ basic demographic information such as length of experience, breadth and depth of experience. These interview protocols were reviewed and approved by a representative of the Incentive Research Foundation. Questions contained in the protocols continued to be refined and expanded over time, based on interviews conducted. Samples of the three final interview protocols are attached. See Appendix B1, B2 and B3.

All interviews were either conducted out at the offices of the interviewees or via teleconferencing. Two team members were present for each interview, each lasting between 3/4 to 1 hour, with all interviews audio recorded with the interviewee’s consent. These interviews were then independently transcribed from the audio recording by a different team member and verified against the written transcripts of the interviewers to ensure consistent understanding of content and meaning. Full sets of all original interviews were kept both in hard copy and electronic form to protect the safety and integrity of the information collected.
To avoid preconceived bias from interfering with pattern analysis, a third team member was assigned to separately analyze each transcripts for patterns, gaps and insights. The next step involved coding each transcript to remove interviewee identity and assign cohorts by stakeholder groups, gender, length of experience, industry sector, type of business meeting, etc. The entire research team reviewed each individual analysis to uncover patterns, contradictions, gaps and interesting insights. To ensure inter-rater reliability, these findings were openly debated by the research team. Any issues were resolved and remaining inconsistencies were double-checked against the original audio transcript to ensure interpretations of the data were accurate. Findings, as discussed in the following section, were triangulated with industry reports and scholarly articles to achieve internal validity.

Profile of Respondents
The nineteen respondents were classified into three main stakeholder groups: Event Planners, Third Party Vendors and Venues Managers. The profile of respondents within each interviewed group varied. Of the nine interviewed Event Planners, eight have been working as in-house Event Planners for financial and insurance companies, while the remaining respondent had extended experience in event planning but is presently focused on education and consultation. Of the six Third Party Vendors, three are technology consultants, one is a meeting design professional, and two are speakers, consultants and educators. The venue group comprised of directors and sales managers in large hotel chains. For confidentiality reasons, the research team has coded the identities of respondents as in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Planner</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The majority of respondents (53%) were in their 40s (9). 71% (12) had more than ten years of experience in the meetings industry, and 47% () had more than twenty years of experience, the Event Planners had the highest average of 16.25 years of experience, while both the Planners and Vendors had a mean of 19 years of experience.

*Figure 2. Age*  
*Figure 3. Years of experience*
Table 3. Years of Experience by stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planner</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8 (0-10 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18 (0-10 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All groups</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>20</td>
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Next two sections will discuss the finding from conducted research. The Section I discusses general trends of adoption of technology and methods employed to measure the effectiveness of meetings in general and technology in particular; the Section II includes a detail overview of types of technology that are used in offsite business meetings and incentive programs, the problems associated with use of these technology and possible solutions to these problems.
PART II

FINDINGS – SECTION A

Adoption of Technology in Meetings

One of the objectives of the research was to ascertain and understand the reasons behind the technology adoption that has taken place in the meetings industry covering both business meetings and incentive events, particularly for planners in the financial and insurance sector. It must be remembered that analysis of adoption of technology has to be viewed primarily from the planners' perspective, since they constitute the demand (Davidson and Cope 76, Swarbrooke and Horner 39), although the other stakeholder groups could play observational and influencing roles. An analysis of the interviews revealed 5 key drivers, though there was only one driver than found consensus, the rest were still considered valuable insights that reflected the state of the industry's engagement with technology. A tabular summary of the 5 factors is displayed below:

Table 4. Drivers of Adoption of Meeting Technology

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>A 1</th>
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<th>A 4</th>
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<th>A 6</th>
<th>A 7</th>
<th>A 8</th>
<th>A 9</th>
<th>B 1</th>
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<th>C 6</th>
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<td>B. Audience Technology Acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Sponsors or Management</td>
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<td>E. External Influencers</td>
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<td>43</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Attaining goals and objectives was overwhelmingly cited as the key reason for the adoption of technology in business meetings and incentive events, mentioned by fifteen (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, B1, C2, C3, C4, C5 and C6) out of a total of nineteen respondents. Of these fifteen, it is notable that 100 percent of planners, 50 percent of venues and 83 percent of vendors agreed with this statement. The unanimous agreement by planners was a strong signal that if these planners believed that the technology was useful and would facilitate their achievement of the goals of the meeting, they would use the technology. The importance placed on goals and objectives is consistent with the Technology Adoption Model, which found that perceived usefulness was a key variable affecting the individual's technology adoption (Davis 333), with further support by Kim who found that job relevance was a moderating factor on perceived usefulness (38).

“As I said, we just have to shift out the stuff that is fun but not useful. And that’s gonna be the challenge going forward I think, for our industry.” (A1 planner)

“Everything we do with technology has to be driven by what we wish to accomplish” (A8 event planner)

“Technology is only useful if it is used perfectly in a way that advances the reach of objectives or strategy…. if you use it frivolously or if you don’t use it purposefully then it becomes an expense that is unnecessary.” (C2 vendor)

It should be noted that goals and objectives would differ across types of meetings, the sponsors' vision and the organizations involved and the applicability of the technology to those goals has to be subjectively reviewed by the planners. Clearly, any individual's perception of use is shaped by many variables, including his/her age demographic (Lee 282). It was alleged by one vendor (C5) that the planners' own demographic has a part to play but two planners (A2, A6) strongly opposed that prejudice.
“The hesitation of using technology is generational...the part of hesitation is which generation of persons planning the meeting, and how comfortable and familiar they are with technologies out there” (C5 vendor)

“I've had to force myself to stay on top of....., you know, to understand the different technologies that are out there because I have an audience that I have to appeal to.” (A2 planner)

While Kim found that prior experience with similar technology has a moderating effect on perceived usefulness (38), our interviews could not identify a definitive correlation. Although A7's negative views about technology adoption may have been impacted by the many problems recounted in her past use of technology; both A1 and A8, who shared with us significant problems encountered in running virtual meeting events, seemed largely unaffected by that adverse experience.

Nevertheless, it appears that the longer the tools have been around and the more tangible functionality they offer, acceptance may reach the point where they gain general acceptance to the extent they may no longer be immediately thought of as “technology”. Rogers' view that innovations that are perceived by individuals as having relative advantage or compatibility would enjoy a more rapid rate of adoption (23), tied in with the views of the sample majority who make first-hand use of event management software in meetings (A1, A2, A3, A7, A8, A9, B1, B2, B4, C1).

Conversely, as only three out of nine planners (A3, A6, A8) have actually made use of social media in their meetings, a fairly new technology for meetings, it is reasonable to conclude that social media has not quite moved beyond “early adopters” stage on the typical S-shaped diffusion curve (Rogers 22). In fact, respondents' comments suggest that social media is a
polarized topic because respondents focused on different attributes of that technology. On one hand, planner A1 was very negatively inclined to the use of twitter and chat rooms in meetings respondent insisted they distracted attendees from listening to the message, a main goal of organized meeting; while on the other hand, planners like A2, A3 and A6 supported the use of social media because it engaged the audience and extended the meeting life, which they believed were key objectives for both business meetings and incentive events.

As attainment of the events' goals and objective revolved around the audience for most part, respondents pointed out the need to be mindful of their target audience's technological receptiveness.

“Understanding what your audience is gonna be comfortable with or not, how much education are they going to need to use what you are proposing or introducing.” (C3 vendor)

“One (important consideration) is the event planner’s understanding and knowledge of their own group... knowing which technologies would be efficient, and knowing how receptive to technologies their attendees are” (C5 vendor).

Following on this point, it was not surprising that eleven respondents (A2, A3, A6, A7, A8, B3, B4, C1, C3, C4, C6) mentioned that the audience demographics factored into considerations about technology adoption in meetings as they felt the older generation might be less interested and find using it a challenge. Such a viewpoint validates the perceived ease of use, the second key variable in Davis' Technology Acceptance Model.

“I think the next generation was brought up that way. The 40 and 50 year olds were not brought up that way, so they have to learn that, and some are not interested in learning that.” (A2 planner)

“And who knows, 20 years from now, as demographics.... the older older generation gets out of the workforce and a new one comes up, we might see a whole stronger trend as we go forward.” (B4 vendor)

“I think meeting managers do not drive the technology a lot... they are more likely to react to things that are ongoing trends or things that their audience would look for” (C1).
The solution to such adoption obstacles was believed by a few respondents to be education (A2, C2, C3, C5) and better technological assistance (A7). No venues expressed any opinion on this issue, which is likely because they are not privy to the process.

So regardless whether you have audience entirely of baby boomers, or if you look at the multi-generational type of meetings, there is still an effective place for technology. (C5 vendor)

In addition, planners felt that external influences like business associates (A1, A5, A6 - vendors and consultants and A1, A4, A5- industry peers) also had considerable influence on the planners' technology adoption. Vendors considered that because of their relative expertise, their advice was more meaningful if they were brought in earlier at the design stage, where they could have input as to which technology could best match the attainment of the planners' stated objectives and constraints (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6). This finding from the respondents was consistent with literature that found that interpersonal channels were more compelling than mass media channels (Rogers 18). It was observed however, that this point was not raised by the three planners who were less inclined to cutting-edge technology, which leads to the speculation that those who were negative about technology in meetings may not be easily swayed by outside influences.

The last noteworthy driver of technology adoption was related to organizational culture and management control and hierarchy.

“The first one is, what culture does the organization have? And how open and willing is the senior executives to incorporating technology?” (C2 vendor)

With eight of our nine planners coming from the financial services and insurance industry, the phrases “traditional industry” and “nature of our business” was repeated by half of the
planners (A2, A4, A7, A8) as reasons for either non-adoption or cautious adoption of the more emerging technology, which finds partial corroboration with literature that organization culture could constitute a serious barrier for the introduction of new technology and new ways of meeting (Arnfalk and Kogg 867).

“The financial services industry is a very conservative industry, so that's not an industry that's really gonna be at the forefront of technology.” (A2 planner)

“Because we're in the financial and insurance industry, we are very regulated. They only recently allowed us to engage on Facebook and LinkedIn...” (A8 planner)

Although literature finds that sponsors or senior executives exerted have influence on meeting details, including the technology employed (Chapmen 46), findings from respondents did not reveal a conclusive pattern across the planner organizations, with 2 planners (A3, A9) requiring sign-off from sponsors or management while another (A1) stated that his sponsors or management did not interfere with his job.

“I don't see any drive for us to get further into technology. We are not hearing from our executive meeting or our meeting sponsors that as a meetings team we need to make this priority, that we need to get on top of technology.” (A9 planner)

“We build a reputation inside the company where they do not micromanage, they do not question..... they let us build the program and events...” (A1 planner)

In conclusion, for any technological innovation to be embraced by the meetings industry, adoption intention typically has to occur at several levels; the event planner himself/ herself, the event planners' perceptions about their attendees' disposition to technology, the meeting owner and the attendees themselves. The research revealed that adoption is basically driven by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, and moderating factors on these two drivers were diverse and expansive, such as age, experience, and awareness for individuals, and at an organizational level, corporate culture and management hierarchy.
Adoption and successful use of technology is directly related to the appraisal methods of effectiveness of used technology tools during offsite business meetings and incentive travels. In order to understand better methods of evaluation of the use of technology in meetings, it is necessary to review the strategies that are being implemented to measure the effectiveness of meetings in general. In next section, the measurement of effectiveness of meetings and technology will be argued.

**Measurement of Effectiveness of Meetings**

There was a variety of factors that respondents considered pivotal in measuring the effectiveness of meetings. Correlation with goals and objectives (C5,A2,C2,A7,A8,C1,A3,C4,C3), experience of attendees (A6,A3,A5,A8,A7,A1,C5,C3), opinion of management (A4, A7, C3, A5) were the most common criteria that respondents used to evaluate the meetings. There was only seven respondents out of nineteen (A3, A4, A5, A7, A8, C2, C3) who mentioned the difficulty of measuring effectiveness of meetings in terms of Return of Investment (ROI). It was interesting to note that term ROI was often used interchangeably with measurement of effectiveness. More specifically, at least two respondents (A4, C3) expressed their concerns with definitions of ROI. It could be that the Phillips Model is a source of such confusion; it is a six level model to evaluate the meetings’ effectiveness with just the top level addressing ROI per se, the whole model is commonly referred to as ROI model, therefore causing confusion among stakeholders. As a meeting technology consultant with over twenty years of experience noted, “There is a great deal of confusion in the industry over what ROI means... because when people say they are measuring ROI... they send out satisfaction surveys... which is not an actual measurement of ROI or what sort of profit is coming back to the bottom line” (C3 Vendors).
Even though the assumption was made that quantifiable measurement method may be a logical way to be pursued by event planners, the complexity and cost of this method made it unpopular among this cohort. Only two out of the nine planners mentioned using an objective method of evaluation that could be quantified, namely producer retention analysis (A2) and productivity analysis (A5). Most other respondents (A1, A3, A4, A6, A7, A8) only collected statistics and feedback which related to the two most basic levels of measurement (level zero and one) in Phillips Model (Phillips 493).

There are several reasons why Philips Model is not so widely used in financial and insurance industries. First, the need for measurement of ROI in monetary terms is required in limited number of events (C2, C3), which aligns with findings from literature review, where Pulliam and Phillips suggest that the level 5 of ROI method is only applied to “5-10% of programs”; on only the “most important, expensive or strategic programs.” (Davis 18; “Mastering Measurement” 17). Second, the adaption of the Philips ROI model for use in measuring meetings effectiveness is a relatively new development; hence such models are likely not very well known yet, except perhaps for independent third party planning consultants like C2 and C3 with industry wide consultancy expertise. Third, event planner’s sponsoring company may not see the need to measure ROI for meetings where general feedback collected suffices.

If correlation of goals and objectives of meetings and evaluation of experience of participants are generic factors that event planners consider while measuring effectiveness of meetings. The
opinion of management requires attention that is more deliberate. Corporate culture and management philosophy did have a significant influence on the way in which an event planner carries out his or her role, and by extension determine whether the effectiveness of meetings and therefore technology are measured (A4, A7, C3). Event planners from finance and insurance industries indicated that they highly value the feedback and directives from their senior executives. A planner from life insurance company has pointed out that, “Whatever your management philosophy is, is what drives whether you measure ROI or not... I’m not going to spend my time and energy that my management doesn't care about” (A7). This opinion resonated with the views of another event planner from insurance company “executive team... can sense whether the effects of the conference have been good or not” (A5).

The reliance of the opinion of management in decision-making is reflected in reviewed literature. Nichols considered that event planner would adjust their actions and behavior according to the expectations of an executive to which he or she reports to (128). According to Chapman, even though event planners can make suggestions, in many cases, final approval for meeting decisions is made by the executives because they are responsible for the budget; therefore, management may inadvertently exert influence over the preference, attitudes and values of their employees (Chapman 46). According to Arnfalk and Kogg, in such companies where the management strongly supports face-to-face meetings, it is likely that policies set up to reflect this attitude is expected to permeate through the organization.

Overall, research findings suggests that qualitative methods of appraisal of meetings are preferred over quantifiable ones. Goals of the event as well as feedback from attendees
appeared to be the backbone of event planners strategy to evaluate the meetings. The management has a great deal of influence over the decision-making strategies of event planners. Therefore, while adopting certain technology or choosing strategies to evaluate its effectiveness, event planners should align their plan with goals of their company and the event itself, understand the needs of their audience and consider the opinion of the management. Having discussed the measurement of effectiveness of meetings at large, the research will focus on specific finding on methods used to be employed to assess efficiency of technology.

**Measurement of Effectiveness of Technology Used in Meetings**

The significance of evaluating technology in meetings is related to the drivers for adoption of technology. Where planners have adopted certain technology in the belief that it would meet a certain goal or satisfy a specific demographic of audience, it was expected that most planners would like to see whether their decision was supported in reality, and take corrective actions if the assessment did not match up.

**Table 5. Respondent’s Opinions on Measurement of Effectiveness of Technology**

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Opinions of respondents were clearly divided on measurement tools that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of technology in meetings. Nonetheless, immediate reaction of six respondents was the skepticism that impact of technology on meetings could be accurately or meaningfully measured (A4, A8, C1, C3, C4, C5).

“I would be surprised if anyone said they could do that. Because what are you measuring? Because people might be measuring in a financial sense, how much money they've made, people might be measuring how many people they got there, or on a scale of 1 to 10, how happy their customers were.” (A4 planner).

“It is difficult to isolate technology from the event, as technology is just part of the event, not the entire event” (C5 vendor)

Overall, event planners in finance and insurance industries, venue operators and vendors seem to agree on difficulty of assessment of technology effectiveness as well as impossibility to distill technology from other factors that may influence the meeting. A survey of the literature also indicates a lack of articles discussing the tools that can be used to measure the effectiveness of technology. Measuring whether a meeting’s goals and objectives were achieved might be a better indicator in measuring the effectiveness of technology.

However, six respondents suggested that the audience's level of engagement (A2, A3, A6, A8, C2, C3) could give an indication of effectiveness of technology on meetings. Two vendors (C1, C3) highlighted that a range of technology usage or participation questions and cost savings metrics were the more quantitative ways that could serve event planners to achieve a more objective measure of technology effectiveness in meetings.

“If you invested in tech to get 1000 people to participate that was previously not possible, then because of that participation you get some outcome that drives your business, that is worth it...
how much sales you made because of the event... you can measure that and you’ll find some quantitative data.” (C4 vendor).

On the other hand, two planners (A2, A4) argued that it is impossible and inefficient to quantify or put a “price tag” when measuring the effectiveness of technology. Yet two respondents, both vendors, pointed out that most measurement of effectiveness only makes sense if there was an ability to make comparison; one pointed out the value of a pre-post measure, and the other suggested an opportunity cost comparison.

“If you want to look at the technology scientifically, you’d have to compare it to other pieces of investment... and look at it from a holistic point of view” (C4 vendor)

“Definitely, some of our clients will analyze it on their own.. how much time you are spending using the event software, how much money you saving, how much quicker these processes are... How much more emails you will send out.. But if this data wasn’t previously in our software there is no way for us to compare.” (C1 vendor)

Two planners, who had conducted surveys for technology evaluation, agreed with vendor C4 about the issue of comparative analysis. Because so far they had rolled out the particular technology a single time, analyzing such survey feedback for insights had limited utility (A1, A3).

Nine respondents, a mix across all stakeholder groups, identified surveys to be a common and straightforward method of seeking attendee feedback on the technological tools used (A1, A3, A6, B1, B3 C1, C2, C5, C6), and typically these questions on the technology would form part of the overall meeting feedback survey form. This method of evaluating the effectiveness of technology is the same one utilized by the majority of the respondents in measuring the effectiveness of the meeting itself (11 respondents- A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, C1, C2, C3).

This finding suggests that a more qualitative than quantitative method of measurement is preferred (C4, C5), not dissimilar to the respondents treatment of meeting effectiveness measurement since few respondents go beyond the first few levels of the Philips Model.
“If you want to look at the technology scientifically, you’d have to compare it to other pieces of investment... and look at it from a holistic point of view” (C4 vendor)

“Definitely, some of our clients will analyze it on their own.. how much time you are spending using the event software, how much money you saving, how much quicker these processes are... How much more emails you will send out.. But if this data wasn’t previously in our software there is no way for us to compare.” (C1 vendor)

Ironically, not even a third of the respondents related the measurement of the effectiveness of the technology in meetings back to goals and objectives (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6).

“You can’t just look at it from a silo.. it has to be looked in context of what you are trying to achieve with the objectives” (C4 Vendor)

“Whether the media... or vehicle proposed... matches and achieves the business purposes of the sponsors. “To achieve strategic objectives of an organization” (C2 Vendor)

Unexpectedly, all six respondents who did were vendors. Given the overwhelming opinion by planners that goals and meetings should drive the choice of technology, it is noteworthy that no planners flagged this critical benchmark of measurement. It appears to indicate either a lack of interest in determining if what they selected to be used was indeed carrying out the purpose which was intended, or the more likely scenario was that the planners were confounded by the challenge of isolating the attainment of the goals to technology and so were prepared to make a judgment based on intuition and attendee feedback. This interpretation seemed to be supported by three vendors (C5, C4, C3) who cautioned against being too caught up in proving the value of technology as making good choices was more a function of common sense and rationalism.
Contrary to our expectations, there was no clear consensus among the respondents on whether and how the effectiveness of technology should be measured, making it difficult to conclusively determine whether the measurement of effectiveness of technology is at all needed.

Ultimately, the most insightful answer provided was in fact, not a direct answer.

“I think it depends on what sort of technology we are referring to. Technology could be anything from a polling device.... to adding some sort of virtual component. So you want to measure those various pieces, what they've contributed...” (Vendor C3)

Respondent’s comment underscored the issue of technology adoption and it involves in alignment with event goals and objectives, which are different according to the meeting types, the specific technology applied and the organizational philosophy. In essence, the question about measurement of the effectiveness of technology cannot be answered in an aggregate manner since there is no one-size-fits-all measurement of effectiveness of technology.

The meeting industry is generally confused with methods used to measure the effectiveness of meetings. Overall, to evaluate events and technology, qualitative method is preferred over quantitative. Goals and objectives, feedback from attendees, organizational philosophy as well as management opinion are the factors that are involved in choosing a method of assessment of meetings and technology used in these events.

**FINDINGS – SECTION B**

“...without a doubt, technology is only taking what we've done, what we are doing in person and just accelerating it and making the reach further.” (A4 planner)

This section talks about types of technology that are used in offsite business and incentive meetings. During the course of interviews, respondents have reflected on types of technologies that were used, or were planned to be used at the offsite business and incentive events; these technology include virtual meetings, Wi-Fi, social media, mobile applications and issues of
security, privacy connected to use of technology during meetings will be reviewed.

Respondents across all three cohorts group identified technology to supports Virtual meetings to be an important asset of business meetings (A1,A2,A5,A6,A7,A8, B1,B2,B3,C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6). Mostly venue managers and third party vendors have used social media in their events (B1,B2,B3,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6); while only three event planners from financial and insurance industries have used social media in their events (A3,A6,A8). The mobile applications were an important tool that event planners (A1,A3,A6,A7,A8,) and third party vendors have used in their meetings (C1,C2,C3,C4). Audience response system, badge scanning technology, cloud computing and some other technology were mentioned, however there were no interesting patterns highlighted regarding these tools. Therefore, the research focused only on technology that was mentioned the most, or on the ones that provided interesting insights.

Wi-Fi
Modern people are increasingly carrying multiples devices and expect to use them everywhere they go (McQuilken 1). In this sense, Wi-Fi, a key connectivity enabler, becomes a basic required technology and is expected by every customer at any hotel or by any attendee at every meeting, conference or convention (McQuilken 1 and Mickey 1). The findings from the research aligns with the literature, as all event planner respondents (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, and A9) required Wi-Fi at every venue. While seven Event Planners (A1, A3, A5, A6, A7, A4 and A9) have negatively assessed the level of technological preparedness of venues, four vendors (C2, C3, C5, and C6) supported event planners and asserted that venues are lagging
behind in the level of technological advancement. Respondents named three main issues, poor bandwidth connection, cost and limited budget allotted for Wi-Fi upgrade.

The event planner candidly addressed the issue of the lack of bandwidth by saying, “[Venues are] not cutting edge in terms of the amount of bandwidth they serve” (A1); this position was supported by third party vendor, “Hotels are not able to provide adequate bandwidth for the needs of their customers, attendees and meeting professionals” (C5). Unlike opinions of event planners and third party vendors, Chandler, however argued that venues are able to provide good bandwidth connectivity (49). Unexpected massive number of users causes the problem with bandwidth. Planners usually underestimate the number of attendees at their events. An under order can stretch the limits of the service and cause problems for everyone Chandler? 50). If quality of Wi-Fi connection is one problem, event planners and third party vendors are also concerned with excessive price of Wi-Fi.

The research observed a controversial range of opinions when it comes to the pricing of Wi-Fi. 21% of the total respondents (A6, A1, C2, A8) highlighted that venues should provide free Wi-Fi services. Event planner A6 mentioned that, “people should not have to pay for Wifi if they are already paying for hotel fees... [people] feel offended that they have to pay to go to a hotel, and yet be told you have to pay for Wi-Fi”; the position of A6 is supported by event planner A1 who stated that, “Hotels making us pay for Internet is ridiculous... Internet should be like air... it should be free. The 28% of the total respondents (A6, A1, A4, C6, A9) believed that Wi-Fi charged by venues were outrageous and inappropriate. Simply put by event planner, “the costs
are really criminal” (A9)

The research indicated that planners and vendors could have been more comprehensive about Wi-Fi pricing, if Wi-Fi was at least reliable. The fact that the high price does not reflect the quality of the product led planners to conclude that venues are taking advantage of the increasing demand of Wi-Fi. While hotels are feeling the pressure of offering free Wi-Fi, they are unwilling to subsidize the cost attached to it (Mickey 1). Only 17% of the total respondents (C5, C4, and C2) were sympathetic towards the constraints facing by venues. The rest (83%) were supported the idea that either Wi-Fi should be free or the price needs to be reduced considerably.

The interviewees provided minor feedback on use of Wi-Fi during incentive programs which is due to the focus of incentive programs on rewarding employees and creating networking opportunities. While 95% of total respondents when talking about Wi-Fi were referred to Wi-Fi in business meetings, only 5% of the respondents (B4) mentioned that Wi-Fi is expedient during incentive programs. The venue manager noted that,

“An incentive in our world is just that; the customers have gone through all the work, they are just here to have a good time. So they leave... obviously not their handhelds their smart phones, but many times they'll just leave a lot of technology behind. Their focus is not technology.” (B4)

With the change of customers’ needs for technology as well as rapid change of trends within technology, venues are facing a constraining requirement to update constantly their technology. Venues feel compelled to resolve the problem, they struggle to come up with budget (McQuilken 40).
Venues are no longer chosen just only because of their beautiful architecture but also because of the high quality of their technology (Rock 1). Due to budget constraint, not every venue is able to provide the quality of technology needed by planners. Some venues claimed that they are well equipped but the problem comes from planners where the latter are usually do not know what they are looking for. Despite all the argument among different stakeholders there is 47.37% of respondents (B2, A4, B1, B3, A8, C2, C5, C3, and C2) that were sympathetic towards the difficulty facing venues in terms of following technological advancements and meeting attendee’s expectations; 31.58% of respondents (A4, B2, B1, A2, C2, C3) have recognized that the difficulty for venues to upgrade their technology is due to the budget constrain, “Extremely expensive for venues to take on and make those changes... but it’s something that is going to leave them in the dust because they are so far behind” (C3).

Overall, there was a disconnect between the views of Event Planners and Venues, where the latter claim to have the best technology but planners tend to be reserved in incorporating more technology because the unreliable venue Wi-Fi gives no peace of mind that the technology tools employed will work well. Planners also want Wi-Fi to be free or at least cheaper. They require greater assurances of more reliable networking. At the same time venues may be artificially holding its pricing high because of favorable market conditions.

The crux of the matter is, stable Wi-Fi connection and adequate bandwidth are very important for normal functioning of a host of internet-based meeting technologies, of which three key ones are discussed in the sections below.

Virtual meetings
There is a consensus among the majority of respondents that virtual meetings will never replace face-to-face meetings. Except of three respondents (A4, A9, C6), the rest of sixteen
respondents had a clear statement of the irreplaceable role that face-to-face meeting play in
the industry (A1, A2, A3, A5, A6, A7, A8, B1, B2, B3, B4, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5). An experienced
Event Planner of a public finance company based in Austin claimed that “couple thousands of
dollars that virtual meetings might save could not buy the body language, eye contact, and the
networking occurred in face-to-face meetings” (A8); this opinion had paralleled with the
opinion of director of incentive sales in a luxury resort, “apparently virtual meetings are fine
and it may cut out some expense, but in our opinion, it will never replace face-to-face” (B4). In
addition, an Event Planner further elaborated on the reason behind such opinion,

“Meetings are by their very nature based on human interaction, very tactile ‘look and
feel and touch and smell’: so a lot of what goes on in an event cannot be replicated in
the virtual environment” (A3).

Due to the high requirement of human interaction and networking in incentive travels, 7 out of
9 Event Planners stated that they would not like to use virtual meetings in the incentive trips
they organized (A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9). As an experienced meeting planner of a public
finance company based in Canada stated, “Incentive meeting is to reward performance and
people want a unique experience, and you can’t do that virtually” (A2). Absence of virtual
element at incentive events goes against the views of Van Dyke and Scofidio’s who state that
“12 percent of respondents are augmenting their incentive meetings with virtual technologies”
(1).

Yet, respondents have more moderate approach regarding use of virtual meeting technology in
offsite business events. Respondents from all stakeholder cohorts discussed the certain types of
meetings that could be done virtually (A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A8, C2, B1, B2, B3, B4, C1, C4, C5, C6), and the majority of the planners indicated that they had incorporated certain types of virtual elements into the meetings they organized (A1, A2, A5, A6, A7, A8). Interviewee C1, a system analyst of a meeting software company stated that virtual meetings could “easily replace small face-to-face meetings” when “no physical interaction was necessary”, while interviewee C4, a virtual meeting consultant supports the above statement by elaborating on the specific types of meetings that could be done virtually, including company updates, product updates, internal meetings, updates for the field sales people, project meetings, and staff meetings. In addition, a sales director of a luxury hotel noted that virtual meetings have helped to save time in organizing smaller meetings and made it convenient for those who cannot attend important meetings to still participate at an event (B1).

Most of the respondents had positive overall attitude towards virtual meetings, and they recognized virtual meetings’ value in enhancing the industry (A1, A2, A3, A8, A9, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6). As a meeting design consultant stated, “So, really what you doing is what I call extending the boundaries of the meetings by having a virtual component” (C2). Among the many benefits of virtual meetings pointed out by the respondents, the most frequently mentioned value of virtual meetings was virtual meetings’ capacity to broaden participation (A1, A2, A3, A4, A8, B1, B3, C2, C3, C4, C5), followed by virtual meetings’ ability to save cost (A1, A4, B2, B3, B4, C1, C2, C6). Also, a meeting design consultant (C2) and two planners who had organized hybrid business meetings (A1, A4) suggested that the virtual meetings could also be a
promotional tool to attract more future audiences. The meeting planner of a finance company shared the feedback from a hybrid national sales meeting he organized,

“People who are watching it as virtual audiences, they actually say that they wish they could be there live. They see all the things going on the networking, the excitement...being an audience live and watching it in your pajamas in your kitchen, it's a completely different experience” (A1).

On the other hand, event planners noted several issues with virtual meetings, lack of reliability on consistent broadcasting (A5), cost (A7) and lack of real interaction (A8, A6). Two respondents from the planners’ cohort noted their concerns regarding the risks of incorporating virtual technology (A5, A6). Interviewee A6 shared his experience of running into an connectivity outage during a global broadcast meeting he was in charge of, where he cautioned, “technology could take you by surprise, it could fail, what is your back-up if that happens”. Similarly, interviewee A5 directly expressed distrust towards virtual technology by stating that their company would not do live webcast, and would always have screen shots ready as a back-up.

The findings suggest that the virtual/hybrid meetings are not existential threats to face-to-face meetings overall, as the physical human interaction is still regarded as essential in meetings industry (Forbes 2; Weber and Ladkin 57; Rizy et al 2, Arnfalk and Kogg 862; Pizham 1). This is especially applicable to incentive travels whose goal is to reward high performance with the unique travel experience (Van Dyke and Scofidio 1). However, virtual meetings’ unique value has been recognized and utilized by the industry as a favorable solution to increase attendance (Julsrud, Hjorthol and Denstadli 399) and save cost (Arnfalk and Kogg 866), which were the two
main drivers to adopt the use of technology in meetings that were identified during the research. In addition, the finding confirms Arnfalk and Kogg’s notion that virtual communication fits better into meetings that involve dissemination of information, those with a low focus on networking, and meetings that are called at short notice, of a short duration and requiring a low number of attendees (862).

The AIG Effect and its Relationship with Virtual Meetings
Interest in the AIG Effect arose out of literature review on incentive travel, as the AIG Effect was constantly alluded to as a recent landmark event that changed the landscape of not just incentive events but the meetings industry; with a trade article that speculated on a possible correlation with the observed increase in use of virtual meetings (Pizam 1), particularly since government regulations that restricted travel and discretionary expenditure were imposed as a direct consequence of the AIG Effect (Bell 12).

Three respondents (A7, A1 and C5) were indignant about the stigma on the meetings industry from the AIG effect, and posited that the problem was rooted in poor positioning of incentive events and meetings in general, that resulted in unwarranted public backlash due to a few black sheep. At the same time, five respondents (A3, A8, B1, C2, C5) viewed the AIG issue positively, noting that the AIG Effect set the stage for the industry to clarify incentive events to the public.

“I think we’ve had a more compelling reason as an industry to demonstrate the value behind what we do, that it’s just not about party planning, that it’s not about fun in the sun, but that there is a strategic purpose behind, what we’re doing and it has a contribution to the company that we work for” (A3).

“Because executives are now paying attention to meetings in ways they never did before. So it is our opportunity to step up and explain why they are strategic and why we need them. Rather than why you should cancel them. (C2)
There was agreement between vendor C2 and planner A9 that as a consequence, meeting planners took ownership and started to re-examine their meetings portfolio so they could weed out those that did not make business sense and justify to senior management on keeping the remaining meetings.

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“Also caused organizations to re-examine their whole portfolio of meetings and decide which ones have value and assess their contribution to overall organization strategy in order to justify retaining them and setting the right budget, for each individual meeting.” (C2).

Interestingly, only 2 planners (A4, A8) said that their meetings were affected by the AIG Effect in that they were compelled to reduce the length of their meetings or shift it to a less grandiose location, while 3 others (A5, A7, A9) affirmed that everything went as planned. Another impact of the AIG Effect on the meetings and incentive events was exemplified by as follows:

“Before AIG, incentive events used to be pure leisure form where there was no business at all, now they try to insert a business element (15%). Signage of event theme or logo will be more prominent than the actually company name” (A8 planner).

From a venue viewpoint, respondent B1 argued that there may be in fact a negative link between venue technology and AIG effect as sales reduced their profit line.

“It may have actually slowed technology down a little bit, because it’s been interrupting revenues at hotels' pretty steeply the last couple of years, so there wasn’t the capital...to put more capital investment in the hotel”. (B1 venue)

At the end of the day, the possibility of direct relationship between AIG effect and virtual meetings was not found. The hypothesis has not been solidly proved as only four respondents (B1, C1, C3, C4) made such an assertion, notably none of these were planners. It was further noted that because the AIG Effect was inextricably linked to the severe economic downturn in the U.S. in 2008, many of the “outcomes” of the AIG Effect could also be equally attributed to
the financial recession. Vendor C4 stated that because of tight budget for travel and the bad publicity, the owners of event turned to virtual meetings.

Social Media
The research shows that the majority of respondents (16 out of 19) indicated social media as a type of current or cutting edge technology mostly used in business meetings (A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A8, A9, B1, B2, B3, B4, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6), where they also identified the various purposes of deploying social media in meetings. The most mentioned purposes of using social media are “engaging and building community” (A2, B1, C4, C6) and “marketing” (A1, A6, B1, C6).

Interviewees A2, B1, C6 highlighted that social media assist with the community building before, during, and after the events, interviewee B1 further addressed the longer benefits social media might bring to the organization,

“Thanks in part due to social media, whether it's Facebook or twitter... if they feel like a part of the community, they are buying in more, whether it is association or corporate, they are more willing to stay with it, contribute to it, feel a part of it, as opposed to a typical worker who just shows up 9 to 5.”

While interviewee B1’s elaboration subtly suggested the longer benefits of community building involved marketing promotion and loyalty retention among participants, interviewee C6 explicitly drew the tight relationship between social media community and social media marketing,

“And the definition of community has become more important as social media marketing became more of another tool for corporations to look at the Internet with their community.”
The research findings suggest that some respondents (A2, B1, C4, C6) confirmed Barrett’s claim that social media can facilitate relevant and valuable interactions extending beyond the physical meetings days through the online community social media platforms provide (22). Interviewee C6’s comment also paralleled Wright’s believe in social media’s marketing potential in meetings, where he asserted that social media could increase attendance for both future and upcoming events by engaging the online community ahead of time (1).

Meanwhile, two respondents also shared their opinions on the negative sides of using social media in meetings (A1, C5). As an experienced audiovisual provider suggested, “I do think that it is an inherent risk with the involvement with social media and not thinking first what you are going to post” (C5). An experienced meeting planner even expressed his outspoken dissatisfaction with Twitter,

“Twitter, I hate Twitter. I think Twitter is a joke. I mean people who employ Twitter in meetings, we've done that (in FICP) where people can tweet comments about speakers and how they are doing for the day; I just find that to be a complete waste of time” (A1).

The opinions gathered from the research suggest that social media as a two-way communication tool (qtd. in Wright 2) can be a two-edge sword. While social media facilitates the experience enhancement for participants and extend the marketing potential as discussed above, it can also be time consuming and distracting (A1), and its nature of providing a two-way information distribution platform also create the challenge for meeting planners to manage the potential risks (“The Future” 4, Barrett 69).

Surprisingly, the research shows that although the majority of respondents from the planners’ cohort recognized social media as a trend in meetings industry (A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A8, A9), only
three of them explicitly indicated the use (A8) or potential embracement (A2, A4) of social media in their own meetings. The findings suggest that social media has not fully reached to the “adoption” stage among meeting planners in finance and insurance industry according to Roger’s theory (11-34). It is also worth mentioning that the reactions in responding to the proliferation of social media varied among the respondents. With the “realization that social media was not going away”, interviewee A2 indicated that “there was a need to come up with a strategy as an industry to help people to engage using the social media”; on the other hand, interviewee A9 claimed that her personal observation of social media being an “interesting” trend would not cause the consideration of deploying social media (A9). Interviewee A9’s comment paralleled with the findings that were discussed earlier about management philosophy being a constraint in adopting new technology (A4, A7, C3), along with Chapman’s theory that management may unconsciously have influence over the attitudes of their employees in adoption of technology (46).

In addition, the demographic profiles of attendees (A2, A4, A8, B4, C6) and industry guidelines on the use of technology in meetings (A2, A4, A8) are two main influencers on the adoption of social media in meetings. As B4 elaborated,

“I see more beginning use of oh let's tweet, let's Facebook, let's scan... We are starting to see that introduced but right now to me it's a baby step level. And who knows, 20 years from now, as demographics, the older generation gets out of the workforce and a new one comes up, we might see a whole stronger trend as we go forward. The pace, the users of technology may continue to go forward at a faster and faster pace. And that’s to be determined”
The research suggests that demographic profile of audiences is considered to be a factor in applying social media in meetings. It can be a challenge for meeting planners to take their audiences’ communication, learning and interaction style into account when applying social media in their meetings (“The Future” 7), the adoption of social media in meetings can be also driven or hindered by the age and industry of the audiences.

Overall, the research shows that social media has been recognized as a trend of technology used in meetings industry; however, the adoption and understanding of social media in meetings vary on a case-by-case basis. While social media has not been fully embraced by the meeting professionals in finance and insurance industry, its robust growth has grabbed the industry professionals’ attention to react to social media’s proliferation accordingly.

**Mobile Applications**

Mobile application was another “cutting –edge” technology that was used by respondents. Five of the nine meeting planners had utilized mobile applications in the past, and one indicated an intention to use it for his or her next meeting. Four out of six vendors had the occasion to recommend mobile applications for the meetings they were involved in, while only 1 out of 4 venues mentioned the use of mobile applications at all. Just over half of the respondents had firsthand experience of the use of mobile applications in meetings. Cohort analysis of interview findings by stakeholder group, years of experience or gender did not reveal any additional insights.

Literature review showed that mobile applications could be used for various functions in meetings, such as distribution of event agendas, notification of changes, planner task
management, collection of feedback or polls, and even integration with social media sites or incorporation of name badges for check-in registration (Spellos 141; www.successfulmeetings.com). Essentially, the scope of what mobile applications can do in meetings can be extremely versatile, or limited, according to design parameters decided by the organizers. In addition to social media, which could also be a part of the mobile application function that is separately discussed, three main purposes of event mobile application use were mentioned by the respondents in the interviews. Three purposes are, ease of dissemination of information, engagement of participants, and convenience for not printing the handouts. The most common opinion held by 37% of respondents (A3, A6, A8, C3, C4, C5 and B3) was that mobile applications helped to create a collaborative event atmosphere by facilitating interaction between attendees and meeting presenters.

“Because the whole approach to how presentations work, due in part to technology and in part because the generation coming to the workspace are demanding more interactivity” (C5 vendor).

As A6 pointed out, instead of needing to distribute a remote device to the audience to operate the Audience Response System (ARS), technology developments since has allowed this function to be incorporated into mobile applications and so audience polling can be much more flexible. As a result, seminars have become more participatory and real-time with that can potentially allow the speaker to receive immediate feedback and tailor content on the spot. Although A6 also commented that, it forced presenters to work harder to engage their audience and added to the richness of the message delivered and active attendee involvement in this interactive process improved their ability to assimilate the content.
“And speakers are gonna have to deal with this, and it’s great, because it creates much more involvement and the audience isn't passive now, they are engaged. So I think you are going to see polling software create and stimulate conversations” (A6 planner).

There was a general consensus that the engagement function afforded by mobile applications was a worthy development, and is reflective of acceptance of the societal shift to an Information Age that emphasized continuous exchange of information and an audience resistance to passively listen to a presenter (Lee 274). 26% of the respondents (A1, A3, A8, B3 and C5) pointed out that one of the advantages they highly appreciate about mobile applications was that it is a platform to disseminate and update event information to attendees in a digital format, such as the event agenda or presentation materials that brought convenience to planners and attendees alike. Organizers could eliminate printing and thus the hassle and cost of transporting massive amounts of paper to the event location (A3 and B3) while attendees were free to go about the event unburdened except for their personal belongings and mobile devices (A1, A3 and B3).

“...especially when you have a group that has different presenters, attendees end up with tons and tons of material. Today they don’t have to print anything.” (B3 venue) “We don’t have to haul around big buckets of information” (A3 planner).

Additionally, A3 and A8 also highlighted the customization function, where the attendee's agenda could reflect the session or activity choices each of them had made for the event. C5 took a more noble tack and commented that avoiding the massive paper print-outs inadvertently resulted in a positive environmental boost, noting the huge number of meetings that occur every year. For the obvious reasons of cost and convenience, there was unanimous support among all who brought up the topic, that distributing information digitally through the mobile application was an excellent feature available in typical event mobile applications.
On the other hand, 3 planners who shared contradicting opinions regarding attendee feedback surveys through mobile applications. While A3 was positive about the fact that attendees could provide feedback about the meeting right while the experience was still fresh in their minds, A7 grumbled about the subdued response rate for mobile surveys as mobile application download was still very low (6% take up rate). Surprisingly, A1 expressed an objection to mobile surveys, as he felt that having to complete the questionnaire right at the event, had the effect of preventing attendees from making the most of the networking and socializing opportunities that were principal reasons for attendance,

“I don't like those, they're too cumbersome and they actually get in the way of people engaging with each other where they are sitting in a corner filling out a survey on their phone” (A1 planner).

Despite the many benefits of mobile applications identified, there were also some negative feedback, though notably all from one planner. A7 shared that experience in deploying meeting mobile applications was not ideal; first, attendees were challenged by the process of downloading and lack of assistance, which caused some to abandon part ways. C5, vendor, who is a technology solutions trainer and speaker, felt that a conscious effort to educate attendees, was key for a smoother transition to heavier technology use in meetings, a comment which is entirely consistent with his job experience in advocating technology for meetings. A8 suggested that contingency back-up plans should be made, in case mobile applications run into unexpected problems. For instance, suggested printing a mini pocket guide to complement the roll-out of a mobile application agenda so the meeting might not be caught on the wrong foot. Finally, A3 and C4 warned against making mobile applications the de facto or only method of carrying out meeting functions like distribution or conducting surveys, because not everyone
are smart phone owners and even if they are, use of mobile applications is still considered widespread.

“....they create a mobile app and they are disappointed that only 30-50% of the people downloaded them.....the reality is, not everyone has a smart phone and not everyone wants to use the functionality that's on the mobile app the way it was designed” (C4 Vendor).

This reservation is not without grounds. According to a November 2012 Pew Research survey, which reveals that while a majority 85% of Americans own a cell phone, only 53% own a smart phone and furthermore, only 43% have ever downloaded an application on their phone, though it is noted that statistics show a steady upward adoption trend over time. The last issue raised (A7, A8, A9 and C4) was that 3 different smartphone operating systems currently exists and a decision for using mobile application must consider the balance between device compatibility and cost implications in developing a multi-platform application. Lastly, larger infrastructure support is needed to reliably utilize this technology, namely Wi-Fi and cell phone coverage.

In summary, the interviews led to the conclusion that notwithstanding the many advantages of using mobile applications in events, its deployment should be in parallel with the manual option in order to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of the attendees, with a special note of the device compatibility issue. Although event mobile applications are capable of a very wide range of uses, planners have yet to fully explore its functionalities and it is expected this will gradually increase as smart phones and mobile applications in general become commonplace with the workforce.
Technology for Incentive Events
The driving force to use of technology in incentive trips is to make event fun, to engage the
attendees and allow them to share their achievement with friends and families (A3, A5, A6, A9).
The purpose of use of mobile applications at incentive trips are the same as in offsite business
meeting dissemination of information and creating engagement among participants
(A3,A5,A4,A2,A1,A7,A6). As an event planner from mutual company pointed out the benefits of
using mobile applications during incentive event, “They could have a customized agenda as
well, they don’t have to carry paperwork, so that was the main piece. The other element of
that, um, the app had the ability to take pictures and upload them (A3)”. Event planners have identified mobile applications to be the most currently used technology to
engage attendees during incentive event. The benefits of mobile apps include the ability to
distribute agendas and information, as well as stay connected with the audience
(A1,A3,A7,A6,A5,A4). As it was pointed out by event planner with 18 years of experience in the
industry, “For our incentive meetings, there isn't a lot of technology that is being employed
aside from mobile applications, doing mobile agendas so people, when they need to be
somewhere, when they are out on a tour” (A1). Text messaging and websites are the other
tools that event planners are using to create engagement and disseminate information among
the participants of incentive events (A5). Even though social media was only mentioned
indirectly by A6 as a tool to motivate employees for incentive event, the other event planner
noted that there are considerations to incorporate social media in the next year event (A4).
Additionally, only one respondent has expressed direct concern over the use of technology
(mobile applications, social media during incentive events:}
“We are a little nervous about attendees posting any kinds of pictures on the internet” (A2).
The venue managers and vendors were able to provide a third party opinion on the use of technology during incentive trips. The ideas of engagement and interactivity during incentive event was supported by some of the venue managers (B3) and third party vendors (C5,C4,C1).
B3 cited an event where mobile phones were distributed for agendas and keeping attendees up to date. Social point a technology that helps sharing photos, while not mentioned by event planners, the function of this device definitely goes in alliance with goals of interactivity and engagement.

“...social point, what we do is we try and identify the social moments that they want to capture, during an incentive trip, so that we can then help, the winners, or people who come to the incentive trips, to share their professional accomplishments with their public friends” (C4).
The literature review confirms the importance of the use of mobile application during both offside business meetings and incentive events. Survey conducted by IBTM finds that mobile application, social media, and virtual meetings are the top technologies for meeting industry (7) which supports a broader concept of ‘need for engagement’ during various events expressed by Lee (274) and Zerista (1). Therefore, if event planners set a goal of engaging their audience and creating more active network of attendees mobile applications will be the correct choice to go with. First, it is easier to control security and privacy issues; second, mobile applications can target a very specific event and audience.
In sections above, the adoption and incorporation of technology in offsite business meetings and incentive event were tied to event goals, corporate culture, functionality of technologies as well as their drawbacks and advantages. The last pivotal factor that influences the decision to
use a certain type of technology is information security and the next section will discourse the
issues and how they affects adoption of technology.

Information Security
Opinions regarding information security in meetings were collected from 14 out of 19
respondents (A1, A2, A3, A7, A8, A9, B1, B2, B3, C1, C3, C4, C5, C6), and half of the 14
respondents (A1, A2, A8, A9, C5, B2, B3, C6) discussed the crucial role IT department played in
protecting information security. As an audiovisual provider C5 stated,

“IT in the organization is having a very important role, and that role is not education,
that role is ongoing stability of all the platforms, to make sure the server, and security
and the cloud base functionality is all being taken care of” (C5).

The research highlighted that the security and privacy concerns affect the types of technology
used at an event. (B2, C4) Third party vendor C4 highlights that “security and privacy affects the
quality of technology used” (C4). However, three planners (A1, A2, A8) from the finance
industry explicitly stated that they had not met any major information security problems in
their meetings because of the strict security standards set by their internal IT departments. As
interviewee A1 noted, “It’s gotta go through some pretty intensive screening process to make
sure that it complies with our technology information security standards.”

While the strict requirements ensured a reliable IT platform for meeting planners, interviewee
A2 also pointed out that the platform created a challenge for her, “the corporate firewall is.... is
so strict, we have to do a lot of work to make it work over a virtual platform”. Another
respondent who was a meeting technology consultant (C6) also observed the challenge created
by the strict guidelines, and he claimed that the extreme restrictive access to websites in insurance industry somehow prevented employees from “getting things done”.

Other than the company’s internal IT department, the research suggests that third party vendors are also critical to ensure the information security in meetings. Two respondents from the planners’ cohort (A6, A9) discussed their strategies to protect information when dealing with registration companies. While interviewee A9 noted that she would prepare a “laundry list” regarding information security issues when she contracted an external registration company, interviewee A6 further claimed that he made sure his contract with registration company indicated the registration company had no right to use attendees’ emails without his express permission. On the other hand, two meeting technology providers expressed their notions of the vendors’ responsibilities in protecting clients’ information (C1, C4). Interviewee C4 stated that his company had the policy to give back (either hand deliver or mail) the personal data to the client who owned it, and made sure to delete the data after the event was over; meanwhile, a registration software provider also emphasized that his company tried to provide the best security possible to protect registrant’s payment information, as he elaborated,

“We already have the ability to walk down either by individual user account or make it unavailable, things like credit card number or SSN, date of birth. We do allow for fields like this to be collected but we encrypt them and make them so that planner could only see the last four digits if they are allowed to see it all. We have our own level of permission. There are occasionally concerns, but usually once they talk and find out our actual security, we never had anyone leave because of that” (C1).
The research confirms some scholars’ contention that corporations have to adopt appropriate policies to meet security concerns (Katos and Adams 319, McCarthy 119), where the findings suggest that respondents across from the three stakeholders’ cohorts have taken a step to address the security issue. The research also suggests that the issue of information security tackles on the collaborations among relevant stakeholders: meeting planners, in-house IT department, and the external third party vendors etc., where the IT department’s role in protecting information security appeared to be the most critical one. On the other hand, interviewee A2 and C6’s observations suggest the drawbacks of the over-strict policies on information security, indicating the challenge of developing consistent and supportive policies that can ensure both information security and efficient operations (Katos and Adams 307).

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Sample size
The research was focused on balancing the opinions of event planners from insurance and finance field, with viewpoints of venue managers and third party vendors. There are several limitations connected to the sample size of stakeholder groups. First, the representation of stakeholders groups were uneven, event planners accounted for nine interviewees, venue managers four and third party vendors six. While the cohort of event planners was large
enough to draw some distinctive conclusions, several patterns could not be verified due to the open-ended nature of the interviews. Second, with only four respondents, the cohort of venue managers was too small to derive definite patterns that could be applicable to venue managers at large, including uneven distribution of types of venues. There were three luxury city-centric hotel brands, and a resort in Las Vegas; the research lacks the opinions from convention centers’ managers, and more resort representation is needed. Larger sample size and diversity in cohort of venue managers could have yielded more opinions on incentive events. The other clear limitation with venue managers was their position within an organization. In two cases, venue managers were detached from direct facilitations of events, which may have limited their understanding of issues pertinent to events. For example, B2 the head of sales for a boutique hotel group did not possess in-depth understanding of the details of events that are taking place on her properties.

In addition, third party vendor cohort consisted of diverse types of consultants, meeting software providers, meeting designers, meeting technology consultants, speakers, educators. The diversity of specialization of this group created a challenge in assessing insights and quantifying them contextually. Because the third party vendors was not a homogeneous group, their level of involvement in event design and facilitation was different. The results would have been more consistent, if the group had interviewed only one vendor type; as interviews would then reveal opinions closely attributed to their level of participation in event design or facilitation.
Sample Focus
The research was focused on financial and insurance sector, findings may not be generalized across the meetings industry, since several issues relating to the use of technology in offsite business meetings and incentive events were found to be sector specific.

The fact that interviews were conducted largely with experienced event planners, venue managers and third party vendors may result in one-sided opinions. The views of respondents with less industry experience, may have introduced interesting cohort analysis. Furthermore, the event participants, the end-user consumer of many meeting technology tools, were not part of the research design.

Lastly, a comparison of technology use in offsite business meetings from other countries that specialize in the meetings industry, for example Germany, would augment the current research whose sample respondents were primarily based in the United States.

Lack of Prior Research
The literature review covered diverse areas, from types of technology used in offsite business meetings to the corporate management of companies. The amount of academic research done in these fields was not equal; the areas of virtual and interactive meetings as well as attitudes to the use of technology in meetings have been poorly represented in academic discussions. More of opinion pieces cover the above-mentioned topics. The gap in academic research supported the significance of conducted research, but at the same time created difficulty in providing a credible background to the discussed issues.
Data Collection Methods

It would have been helpful if the pilot interviews were conducted. Pilot interviews would have helped refine the questions and add missing ones. The interim assessment of interview protocol and manner of conducting interviews would have helped to structure the interview questions more rigidly, so the insights would have been easily identified and analyzed.

The technical issues have caused some limitations in the conducted research. Most of the interviews were held over a conference line. The problems with connection and quality of the calls created difficulty for researchers to control the flow of the interview and the content of the answers. For example during the interview with C6, one of the interviewers was unable to log-in to the conference call, essentially this interviewer was unable to bring the expertise and insights that would have been useful. The poor quality of the sound caused interviewers to ask same question several time which led to interviewee fatigue.

Interviewees were a subject to acquiescence, social desirability and extremity bias. On several instances, interviewees did not possess knowledge on certain topics, yet provided answers for the sake of answering. This could be seen with interviewee B2, when asked about the measurement for effectiveness of technology, responded got defensive and provided points of view that had nothing to do with the query. Social desirability bias was seen among several respondents. When interviewees were asked about technology, they immediately associated the word technology with popular concept of social media, particularly Facebook and twitter. Finally, extremity bias was spotted among several respondents, for example, personal dislike of
particular technology led respondent to provided very subjective opinion on the usefulness a particular technology.

Auspices bias was spotted among third party vendor cohort. For example, because technology people are interested in promoting their product, they tended to give more positive assessment to their services, or products.

**Future research**
Based on limitations of this research future work could involve a comparative analysis of use of technology across different industries and countries, for example financial, medical and automotive industries. It is deemed that providing a comparative analysis with other established destination for offsite business meetings and incentive travel, would yield plethora of insights on the use of technology. Additionally, future research could collect attendees’ viewpoints to solidify findings and provide a wider range of opinions on needs and adoption patterns, and also to compare the perspectives across key stakeholder groups. The effectiveness of different types of the measurement models of meetings technology can be tested in hypothesis research.

Use of virtual meetings in offsite business and incentive events, social media and issues of Wi-Fi can be the areas for future investigation. As emphasized by vendor C3, there is a need to distinguish each type of technology when asking the question on evaluating effectiveness because of the many different types of technology involved, which performed different functions, at various stages of the meeting process; for instance they ranging from pre-planning (registration systems); during meetings (social media or virtual meetings); to post meetings
(evaluation, feedback collection systems). Though this aspect of technology use is out of the scope of this project, future research can be conducted to individually assess the various types of technology that were used and assess how each technology in isolation improves or does not improve the meeting process. This future research would ensure that the collected findings and responses would yield more productive results.

Additionally, the new research can focus on development of these technologies based on requirements of the financial and insurance industry. For example, a study that will help to understand how to enhance security tools for social media platforms. Additionally, the findings of this research gives possibility to look for a broader picture of adoption of technology and the models that can potentially ease the transition of technology use in offsite business and incentive meetings at finance and insurance industries.

CONCLUSION

This paper represented an initial phase of research, which delved into the use of technology in both business meetings and incentive travel plans and examined if and how technology helped the stakeholders achieve their goals and objectives. The use of technology in the form of virtual meetings was not widespread among our stakeholders. While the literature conveyed the message that virtual meetings can improve business meetings for people who work with geographically dispersed companies, especially for educational and informational sessions, this type of meeting was not very popular with our respondents because overarching goal of the financial and insurance industries is building and enhancing relationships. It was felt that virtual meetings while they can be useful to achieve other purposes, do not support the primary networking goals of the business meeting.
It is clear from the interviews conducted that while technology is used prior to the meetings for example in registration and dissemination of information about the event, current technology such as mobile applications and emerging technology such as social media were not widely used in business meetings or incentive travel programs. This research found that Wi-Fi was the item referred to by most respondents when asked about technology because the quality and dependability of the service in terms of bandwidth is critical to the success of the meeting. The research also found that while reliable wireless internet access is needed, the venue often falls short of the expectations of event planners and technology vendors.

An area for further research is the use of social media in and its impact on business meeting and incentive travel programs within the financial and insurance arena. The possibility of enhancing relationships through social media has not been widely considered by the interviewees of the current research conducted”, as some have recognized the ability of social media to enhance relationship and build online communities. Both the financial and insurance industries are restricted by industry standards that limited the accessibility to technological advances, mainly for information security reasons. Also, these two industries are traditional by nature and the perception that communicating via social media distanced meeting attendees from each other rather than fostered relationships.

In light of the results of our interviews, the scholarship read and what is known about technology, meetings and incentive travel programs, further research needs to be conducted in
the area of technology use in business meetings and travel incentive plans with focus on how the technology contributes to achieving the goals of the, as there does not seem to be any consensus among the parties involved on which metrics are most appropriate. There is also recommendation for research based on the wide disparity of opinions around the issue of evaluations; there is an unresolved question for evaluating incentive travel programs and off-site business meetings in terms of return on investment. The ability for stakeholders to examine and evaluate the value derived from the business meeting or incentive travel program in an efficient cost effective and accurate manner would allow the stakeholder to make more informed decisions.
APPENDIX A – Event Questionnaire

This survey is intended to collect the feedback from attendees on the various meeting technology tools used at the event just attended, in order to enable to organizers to improve the quality and experience of future meetings. There are 3 sections to this survey. Kindly complete all the sections. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation.

*Kindly the appropriate responses in each question.*

I Participant Background Data

Q1 Gender
- □ Male
- □ Female

Q2 Age Group
- □ 30 and under
- □ 31-40
- □ 41-50
- □ 51-60
- □ 61 and over

Q3 Highest Education Level Attained
- □ High School/ Vocational Institute
- □ College or Polytechnic
- □ Post graduate and above
- □ Prefer not to say

Q4 Job Function
- □ Sales Agent or Employee (Client Facing Role)
- □ Non Sales Employee (Middle Office)
- □ Non Sales Employee (Back Office excluding IT)
- □ Non Sales Employee (in IT)
- □ Other

Q5 Average Personal Monthly Income
- □ $5000 and below
- □ $5001 to $10,000
- □ $10,001 to $15,000
- □ $15,001 to $30,000
- □ Above $30,000
- □ Prefer not to say
## II General Technology Familiarity

Q6 How frequently do you access the internet on the following equipment/devices?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do not own one</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desktop PC</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop or Notebook</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Phone</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7 What do you access the internet for? (Please tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emails</th>
<th>Random Browsing / Research</th>
<th>Transaction (Banking, Purchase, Booking etc)</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Social Sites (Facebook, Pinterest etc)</th>
<th>Online Games</th>
<th>Download Programs or Application s</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desktop PC</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop or Notebook</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Phone</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## III Evaluation of Experience with the Meeting Technology

Q8 Did you make use of the technology available in the event you just attended?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Yes, I did</th>
<th>No, and am not interested to</th>
<th>No, but I'll try it if available at the next event I attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Registration and Payment</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badge Scanning/ Entry Procedures</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Facebook Page</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter Back Channel</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of Virtual Meeting Elements</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Response System (Presenter Interaction)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Mobile Application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9 Please indicate the frequency of the following technology use in other meetings and events you have attended in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1-2 times</th>
<th>3-5 times</th>
<th>6 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Registration and Payment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Entry Badge Scanning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Facebook Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter Front Channel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of Virtual Meeting Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Response System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Mobile Application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10 Please assess the overall effectiveness of the technology used in this meeting compared to the previous experiences. For technologies encountered in this meeting for the first time, please leave that row blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Much Worse</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>A Lot Better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Registration and Payment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Entry Badge Scanning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Facebook Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter Front Channel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of Virtual Meeting Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Response System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customized Event Mobile App</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you had used the technology listed, please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate number on the scale below

Q11 Online Registration and Payment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like using the event's online registration and payment system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event online registration website was user-friendly and simple to use</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saved a lot of time doing the event registration and payment online</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The payment system gave me confidence in terms of online security and privacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The automated emails and information sent by the registration system were helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt spammed by many emails issued by the online registration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to use the online registration and payment system again to attend meetings in the future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the online registration and payment website and process, if any:

__________________________________________________________________________
Q12 Entry Badge Scanning

*This question is applicable only for attendees who were at the in-person meeting*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked using badge scanning to gain event entry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The badge scanning procedures were fast and efficient</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The badge scanning procedures were a mess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had problems knowing how to do the badge scanning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to use badge scanning again if future meetings offer it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the entry badge scanning process, if any:

_______________________________________________________________________

Q13 Event Facebook Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked the use of the facebook page for the event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facebook page helped to create a sense of community and belonging beyond just the event date</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facebook page facilitated 2-way interaction that enhanced my overall event experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facebook page marketing by the organizers was useful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facebook page helped the event be more effective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facebook page added no value to the event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found using the facebook page challenging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to use the facebook page in future meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the event facebook page, if any:
_______________________________________________________________________

**Q14 Twitter Back Channel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked the use of the twitter back channel for the event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The twitter back channel helped to create a sense of community and belonging beyond just the event date</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The twitter back channel facilitated 2-way interaction that enhanced my overall event experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The twitter back channel helped the event be more effective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The twitter back channel added no value to the event</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found using the twitter back channel challenging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to use the twitter back channel in future meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the event's use of the twitter back channel, if any:
_______________________________________________________________________
Q15 Virtual meeting application- Remote keynote speaker
*This question is applicable only for attendees who were at the in-person meeting*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked the incorporation of the virtual meeting elements into the meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The connection (both audio and visual) with the remote speaker was good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would have preferred to have the speaker present in person if possible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the use of virtual meeting technology for the keynote speaker to address the meeting remotely, if any:
______________________________________________________________________________

Q16 Virtual meeting application – remote attendance
*This question is applicable only for attendees who attended the meeting remotely*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked attending the virtual meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of the virtual meeting (audio and visual) was good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saved time and money by attending the virtual meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not have attended at all if not for the incorporation of the virtual meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After experiencing the virtual meeting, I would prefer to attend in person in the future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The networking and human interaction are reasons why I would attend in person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chat room helped me interact with the speaker and attendees although I was not at the event in person

I am likely to attend a virtual meeting again if future meetings have this option

Please share your other opinions on the use of virtual meeting technology for the remote attendee access to the meeting, if any:

Q17 Audience response system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I liked the audience response system</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think the audience response system made the meeting livelier and more interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I learnt better because of the high level of interaction between the speaker and the audience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The audience response system did not work because the speaker did not react well to the interactive nature of the session</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to use the audience response system in future meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the use of audience response system for the remote attendee access to the meeting, if any:
### Q18 Customized event mobile app

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked the event mobile application</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mobile app made life a lot easier as I got all the meeting materials in the digital format</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The customized agenda was the best part about the mobile app</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was great to do the survey on the app right after the session when it was still fresh in my mind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had significant problems downloading the app</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encountered considerable technical glitches with the app after I downloaded it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to use mobile apps if future meetings offer it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please share your other opinions on the use of the customized mobile app for the meeting, if any:

__________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B – Interview Permission Letter

Dear (Mr. / Ms.)

Good morning!

We are a group of 7 Tourism Management & Hospitality graduate students from New York University (NYU). Mr. Rodger Stotz of Incentive Research Foundation, with whom we are working on this project, has kindly provided your name as a possible participant in our research focusing on "Technology Used in Business Group Travel".

The study was developed to investigate the extent and effectiveness of technological applications, specifically in incentive travel and offsite business meetings. With continually evolving technology changing the way things are done, we think it is important to understand the functions, benefits and drawbacks that technology brings to MICE, particularly given the industry's economic significance.

We are therefore writing to request an interview with you. Your knowledge and experience as a publication professional in meetings & events industry will be very valuable for our project. Although you will receive no direct benefit from the study, this research may help my team and, ultimately the industry, to better understand how technology affects offsite meetings.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and very much appreciated. You may certainly decline to participate or refuse to answer any question. If you agree to be interviewed, could you kindly let us know your availability for a conversation (not likely to exceed an hour) sometime in this week or the next? We will have two to three members from the team to conduct the interview, and please let us know if you would prefer a face-to-face meeting or a conference call.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

(YOUR NAME) on behalf of the Team
APPENDIX B1- Interview Protocol (Venue Operators)

1. What is your experience with facilitating off-site business events/meetings?
   - Purpose: to understand profile of interviewee, his experience in the industry
   - Type of off-site events/Meetings (business = sales, product launches, training, etc.; incentive = group incentive travel for top performers)
     - When incentive group travel is held at your hotel, is it common to see companies include a business element to the event? Would it be fair to say that incentive travel is frequently to resorts and non city locations, or do both types of destinations attract different clientele?
     - How different is it taking care of clients who organize business meetings versus incentive travel (with or without the business element)? Can you explain?
   - Experience: Offsite events/Meetings facilitated:
     - Number of meetings you host per year
     - Number of attendees (average, smallest, largest)
     - Length of meetings (average, shortest, longest)

2. At which stage of the meetings/events planning does the venue facilitator get involved?
   - Aim: to understand the negotiation process between the meeting planner and venue facilitator
   - e.g. do they work with the client from the outset, openly compete with other venues for the contract (RFP?), or do they only come into the picture after the corporate decision?

3. Do you influence the decisions made on use of technology? How do you respond to additional technology requests that are beyond your capabilities?
   - For instance, if the technology that the client wants is not available at the venue, how does it affect the meeting/planning? (e.g. do they need to assist in renting the necessary equipment, do they provide substitutes, do they escalate for purchase approval, etc)

4. How does your venue’s technological offerings compare to your direct competitors?
   - Purpose: whether technology used in venues is ahead or behind the technology/meetings curve, the fact that venues always have to chase new technology trends

5. Can you name the current technologies that your venue is using?
   - Software/hardware etc
   - Other than technology used during the meeting by the attendees, does your venue use any software for planning, registration, administration, coordinated booking across meeting rooms, bedrooms, concierge activities, etc (i.e. the work behind the scenes)

6. What in your view is driving the use of technology usage in meetings?
   - (e.g. keeping up with competing venues, planners’/attendees’/guests’ demands, hotel executives and shareholders stance toward technological advances, cost “technology is
becoming highly affordable”/ “constant investment to keep up”, environmentally conscious- green “use less paper,” popularity of the technology, others??)

7. How do you measure the effectiveness of current technology used in meetings? Is it done more in a qualitative manner or quantitatively?
   - E.g. official surveys, verbal feedback, monitor social media comments, or a more mathematical methodology by assigning scores and coming up with some kind of blended measure of success etc.
   - How would you determine if the use of a certain technology (or technologies) have enhanced the meeting or made a positive difference in outcome achieved compared to what you would have accomplished without?
   - Can you share examples of the most effective technologies you have used? Least effective? Note: attempt to confirm/identify what caused ones to be effective and others to be ineffective.

8. Can you share some significant problems or adverse issues you encountered with usage of technology at meetings and how you resolved them if applicable?
   - (e.g. inadequate IT support, equipment or technology too complex, audience not paying attention or disruptive, malfunctioning technology, etc)

9. Who is liable for the following concomitant (side) issues?
   - Prompt A. Online Security for attendees and back-of-the-house
     ○ Video Conferencing, WiFi, security of information, IT Protection and Security, Protocols
   - Prompt B: Venue Security.
     ○ What additional facilities are provided to ensure security of personal property of attendee participants during meetings?
     ○ (eg secure storage of flash drives, stolen computers, tablets, phone cameras/pics of meeting slides, etc.)

10. What “cutting edge” or “emerging” technology have you witnessed being used at meetings/ events and what opinions do you hold on their use?
    - Eg social publishing for promoting event/ engaging attendees, NFC, indoor GPS, online gaming, twitter front channel/ back channel as immediate feedback etc.

11. What is your experience in hosting/facilitating “hybrid” meetings for clients?
    - What is the trend for incorporating remote attendees and speakers through virtual technology?
    - What is the (financial, logistical) impact on venues of this trend?

12. Are virtual meetings a threat to your business? or beneficial to your business?
    - Meeting Planner: good for cost savings
    - Can incentive meetings be substituted by virtual ones? Do people actually enjoy incentive meetings? Is it an effective way for networking and discussing company’s issues?
13. Overall, do you see technology enhancing or diminishing the effectiveness/experience of meeting?

14. What other thoughts could you share about technology from your experience working in a hotel's meeting/ events department?
   ● Could you recommend us any further contacts to talk to?
   ● Has it made your job easier or more challenging? Or both?
APPENDIX B2- Interview Protocol (Third Party Vendor)

1. What is your experience with off-site business meetings and incentive travel?
   - Purpose: to understand profile of interviewee, his experience in the industry
   - Please ask or note down demographic information: Age, (Gender is obvious), current or past job scope, years of experience in the industry, etc.
   - **Experience:** Offsite events/Meetings facilitated:
     - Experience in types of off-site business meetings, or incentive travel
     - Number of meetings you were involved with per year
     - Number of attendees (average, smallest, largest)
     - Length of meetings (average, shortest, longest)
   - Can you share with us general observations on trends of meetings & incentive trips in the past 3-5 years?

* A side point of interest - are most of your clients American companies? Do they hold all of their their meetings/ incentive trips within the area of North America- USA, Canada, Mexico and Caribbean? For business meetings (not incentives trips)- is it fair to say that corporates want greater proximity for cost reasons (since they pick up the tab) while associations try to find the most accessible location for the majority of its members?

2. What factors are considered during the planning stage of the meeting or incentive travel and how do they affect its design?
   - (E.g. costs, headcount, demographics/geographical origin of attendees, role of attendees- sales/non-sales/ executive/non-employees/ others, activities/ facilities, location, technology available, security, industry that the sponsor is operating in)
   - **Part B. Are there outside influences that affects the priority of these factors from the perspectives of the planner or sponsoring organization?** (e.g. pressure in the areas of finance, environment, reputation)
   - Are you aware at what stage of the planning process, does technology considerations come in?

3. Whose feedback are critical to planning meetings and incentive trips?
   - E.g. top executives, employees/ attendees, venues management, media.
   - **Part B: How and when is this sort of feedback collected? Channel/speed?**
   - **Part C: If feedback is collected, how, when and by whom is it used?**

4. Can you name a few of the “standard package technologies” used in meetings & events (ranging from obvious ones used at the event itself to those behind the scenes)?
   - Is there a technological divide between the “standard demands” by various industry sectors, different tiers of venues, venues across the country or demographics of attendees and if so what is the gap between the 2 extreme ends of expectations or offerings?
   - On the assumption that incentive travel comprises only of the leisure element (though with a business objective), can you tell us how, if applicable, technological development has impacted incentive travel?
5. Can you share with us some new & interesting technology that has emerged and your opinions on them? Is there a particular trend you see regarding which areas meeting technology tends to develop in.
   • e.g. social publishing for promoting event/ engaging attendees, NFC, indoor GPS, online gaming, twitter front channel/ back channel as immediate feedback etc. Software like Prezi, Mikogo, Google Plus, Technograph, Instaviz?
   • e.g. heavily focused on enhancing the attendees’ experience? or maximizing planner/venue efficiencies
   • Can you share examples of technologies with the most positive impact on a meeting/ incentive trip outcome and those that detract from their purpose?

6. What are the drivers of technology used in meetings and incentives?
   • e.g. planners’/attendees’/ guests’ demands, competitive spirit between venues, increasing affordability or access, constant move to be more environmentally conscious, popularity of the specific technologies, etc

7. We understand it’s already a challenge to measure how effective (the ROI) a meeting or incentive trip is. But taking it even one step further, how do you measure the effectiveness of current technology used in meetings & incentive trips (or justify their use)?
   • Is it done in quantitatively (methodology or theory?) or in a more qualitative manner? Can you elaborate?
   • How would you determine if the use of a certain technology(ies) have enhanced the meeting or made a positive difference in the outcome achieved compared to what you would have accomplished without?

8. Can you tell us about some problems or issues with use of technology at meetings and give us some examples?
   • e.g. inadequate IT support, audience not up to the technology (not everyone has a smartphone or wants to registered online!!), audience ends up not paying attention or disruptive, malfunctioning technology, theft of confidential information, leak of personal data, system security (virus), etc

9. In general do you think venues (e.g. hotels, conference centers, etc) are up to date with technology? Does this differ across the country or globe or type of venues? How does this impact your planning and operational efforts?
   • Purpose: whether technology used in venues is ahead or behind the technology/meetings curve, the fact that venues always have to chase new technology trends,
   • Ask what are tech offerings are they referring to in answering this question.
10. If applicable, how were those issues resolved in the above examples? In the bigger picture, is the industry involved in paving the way for more technology use by working through the said issues on a more coordinated fashion?
   • e.g. staff training, upgrade of equipment, purchase of extra firewalls/ encryption etc

11. What is your experience with virtual meetings?
   • Just to get a sense- how much do you think virtual meetings have, or will, replace face to face ones? Which types of meetings are most vulnerable to this trend? Do you think it will it how incentive travel is conducted, and if so in what way?
   • What is the trend for incorporating remote attendees and speakers through virtual technology?
   • What is the (financial, logistical) impact of this trend?

12. Overall, do you see technology enhancing or diminishing the effectiveness/experience of meeting? Can you explain?
   • Has it made your job easier or more challenging? Or both?

13. Are there any other thoughts you could share about technology in meetings & incentive trips?
   • Could you recommend us any further contacts to talk to?
APPENDIX B3-Interview Protocol (Meeting Planners)

SECTION A: UNDERSTANDING MEETINGS INDUSTRY

1. What is your experience with organizing off-site business events/meetings? How long have you been doing this? Who were your clients?
   • Purpose: to understand profile of interviewee, his experience in the industry
   • Type of off-site events/Meetings (business = sales, product launches, training, etc.; incentive = group incentive travel for top performers)
     o If INTERVIEWEE mentions incentive travel - ask him to clarify our understanding (i.e. does incentive travel solely refer to the leisure part)
     o If NOT, ask him - what does incentive meetings mean to you?
   • Offsite events/Meetings organized (get numbers for both incentive events and other types of business meetings):
     o Number per year you plan/organize
     o Number of attendees (average, smallest, largest)
     o Number of days (average, shortest, longest)
     o Cost per pax (how much is spent per participant – ave, range)
   • What changes, if any, have you experienced over the past 3 – 5 years in these meetings? Ask about AIG effect on their organization.

2. What are the goals- both organizational and personal ones you set- for these meetings that you organize?
   • Purpose: to understand general goals of the meeting
   • What is your definition of a meeting’s effectiveness? Assuming there are numerous goals/objectives, can you prioritize them by importance?
   • How do you measure whether these goals have been met? How does your organization measure if those goals are met in practice? Is there a way to quantify the accomplishments of these objective? For instance, how do you compare pre meeting & post meeting levels of the effectiveness criteria?
   • Do you incorporate Return of Information (ROinfo) or Return of Investment (ROIInvestment) to measure the effectiveness of the meetings? What are the strategies/formulas to calculate it?

   • Note: Make sure to ask separate questions for ROIInvestment and ROInformation.

3. Whose feedback would you say is critical to the planning of meetings?
   • E.g. top executives, employees/attendees, venues management.
   • Part B: How and when do you collect this feedback? Through what means/channels?
     o Part C: If feedback is collected, how and when is it used? (primarily by planner, or reported to meeting sponsor, or???, is it used & applied immediately to improve the current meeting or only to future meetings?)

4. What factors/considerations do you take into account during the planning stage of the meeting and how do they affect the meeting design?
• (E.g. costs, headcount, demographics/geographical origin of attendees, role of attendees- sales/non-sales/ executive/non-employees/ others, activities/ facilities, location, technology available, security, industry that the sponsor is operating in)
• Part B. Please can you rank these factors/considerations by importance
• Part C. Can you tell us how, if these weights vary (at various times during the planning and operation of the meeting)? (E.g. over purpose, over time, across circumstances (economy downturn) or hinges on individual decision maker?)

SECTION B: TECHNOLOGY Used in Your Meetings
1. How would you describe your technology expertise on a scale of 1 to 5? (5 being very tech savy and 1 being tech illiterate)
   • How do you keep current on technology?
   • How do you deal with a potentially wide variance in response to technology used e.g. not everyone is comfortable with using the type of technology or a minority does not own the devices that everyone else is using to send feedback or pass on meeting venue change etc.

2. Can you tell us about how you carry out the process of planning a meeting?
   • Purpose: Having asked about the goals set, we next focus on the technical/operational aspect of planning a meeting.
   • i.e. from the time the need for a meeting is identified to the completion of the meeting?
   • What technology do you consider crucial/most helpful?
   • Conversely, do you feel any technology gets in the way, or is ineffective? Examples?
   • What do you see as “cutting edge” or “emerging” technology?
     o Corbin Ball has identified a few technologies in meetings as cutting edge e.g. social publishing for promoting event/ engaging attendees, NFC, indoor GPS, online gaming, twitter front channel/ back channel as immediate feedback etc.)--What are your views on them?
     o Have you used Software e.g. Prezi, Mikogo, Google Plus, Technograph, Instaviz during your events? How do you find these applications?

   • [Note to self: At what stage of the meeting planning process does the technology consideration come in?]

   • Who makes the decisions in relation to choice of technology?
     o Does the company change software/hardware when there is a crisis/hiccup or when there is new technology in the market?
     o How does the corporate level decide on the choice of renewing technology? Do they base it on feedback of Tech Sales Dept / IT Dept? How high along the food chain does these new purchase/ acquisitions have to be approved?

3. In general do you think venues (e.g. hotels, conference centers, etc) are up to date with
technology? Does this differ across the country or globe or type of venues? How does this impact your planning and operational efforts?

- Purpose: whether technology used in venues is ahead or behind the technology/meetings curve, the fact that venues always have to chase new technology trends,
- Ask what are tech offerings that they consider are lagging?

4. Do you measure the effectiveness of technology used in meetings? How do you measure its effectiveness?

- [Note to self] How would you determine if the use of a certain technology (or technologies) have enhanced the meeting or made a positive difference in outcome achieved compared to what you would have accomplished without? Any suggestions as to how these can be quantified?
- Can you share examples of the most effective technologies you have used? Least effective? Note: attempt to confirm/identify what caused ones to be effective and others to be ineffective.

5. Can you share some significant problems or adverse issues you encountered with usage of technology at meetings and approaches for solution?

- [Elaboration] (e.g. inadequate IT support, equipment or technology too complex, audience not paying attention or disruptive, malfunctioning technology, etc) What do you think about multi-tasking during online meetings? Have encountered malfunctioning of “technology” during the events you organized? Tell us what happened? How did you resolve the issues?

- **Part B. Online Security**
  - How secure is video conferencing? Is there danger of stealing the content? In regards to security of information, do you trust online conferencing or real face-to face ones?
  - Which other areas does security of information (or vulnerability to hackers/viruses) pose a big concern in the increasing use of technology in meetings? How has this be dealt with so far and do you foresee a permanent solution in the near term?
  - Purpose: Information Security, IT Protection and Security, Protocols

- **Part C: Offline Security.** What measures are taken to ensure off-line security (flash drives, stolen computers, tablets, phone cameras/pics of meeting slides, etc.)

6. What in your view is driving the use of technology usage in meetings?

- (e.g. cost “technology is becoming highly affordable”/ “constant investment to keep up”, sponsors “my organization cannot be seen to lag behind competitors”, attendees “how can you not provide free wifi!?” , planners “need for automation”, environmentally conscious- green “use less paper,” popularity of the technology, others??)
• Would you say that technology has changed the entire landscape of how meetings are conducted or have they served ultimately just to enhance and complement meetings? Please elaborate.

7. What is your experience with “virtual” meetings? (has the person actually used them, or are they providing their opinion) What is your personal opinion about virtual meetings? Do you get the same effect/outcome as with a face-to-face meeting? If applicable, please explain what the difference is?
   • Purpose: Is the personal touch in meetings important to you?
     Moral/emotional/personal question
   • Can incentive meetings be substituted by virtual ones? Do people actually enjoy incentive meetings? Is it an effective way for networking and discussing company’s issues?
   • More Q about negative ramifications of the wider use of technology - eg social etiquette of using mobile devices as distraction

8. What other thoughts could you share about technology from your experience as a meeting planner? Has it made your job easier or more challenging? Or both?
APPENDIX C – Annotated Bibliography

SOURCES


This short 1-page article on a reputable meetings industry periodical offers tips from two social media marketing experts on the utilization of social media including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter when conducting meetings. The tips include understanding if the meeting attendees are ready to use social media around the event, considering the addition of staff or a contractor to help with the social media activity and preparing for criticisms. It also provides suggestions on expectations management and results measurement.


The article talks about how the increased substitution of face to face meeting by virtual communication might have a positive impact on the environment and has showed the potential for financial improvement. The article also outlines that investing in technology that can enable virtual meeting does not automatically result in environmental and financial improvements. By describing two case studies regarding factors influencing communication and meeting behavior, the article identifies several drivers and obstacles for virtual meetings and proposes solutions that might improve the use of virtual communication in business meetings.


This article focuses on three types of multi-point meetings-audioconferences, videoconferences, and web conferences to provide information about the rationale for choosing each option. Introduction about facility infrastructure, wired and wireless networks, application for meetings, telecommunications, internet services, support services, multimedia services, and system capabilities are covered. The author also contends that multi-point meetings will improve the way organizations communicate as the technology evolves, where people will be able to communicate their ideas using the most effective means possible.
The author provides a comprehensive overview of the various technology involved in multi-point meetings, offering valuable resources for the research. However, further discussion regarding the applications in offsite meetings are to be explored.


This article by Corbin Ball has succinctly summarized the future trends of technology used in meetings and provided a detailed analysis of the benefits and limitations of the implementation of such technology. This article has also highlighted the significant shift towards mobile interfaces in an interconnected world where mobile devices are ubiquitous, and consumers rely heavily on mobile devices, hence the increased need for event planners to keep abreast of developments in the field of mobile apps, the role of social media, database and computing management and meeting venue infrastructure. The article also discusses the importance of cloud computing and the growing emphasis of hybrid meetings.


The articles talks about the evolution of technology for both the meeting industry and for the society in general. It gives a chronological list of significant technology milestones. it also gives the role of each technology identified and its impact in the society as well as in the meeting industry.

The present article allows a good knowledge and understanding of the evolution of technology in the meeting industry. However some technology innovations are still missing. further research should look for a comprehensive list of technology innovations.


This article introduces the functions of iPads and other tablet devices, as well as their applications in events and trade shows. In particular, the author introduces how tablet devices can be used for interactive conference programs, course notes distribution,
surveys, interactive exhibitor displays and information kiosks, lead exchange and qualification, interactive exhibit guides and floor plans, hotel sales and planner assistance, and speaker Q&A.

This article provides a comprehensive overview of how tablets devices can be utilized for meetings, which is valuable for understanding tablets devices’ role in facilitating current meetings. However, little disadvantages of tablets devices are discussed in the article, which needs to be further examined.


This is a short trade article summarizing the author’s views on technology trends in the hospitality industry in the MICE space. It represents a concise introduction into the current landscape of technology use in meetings and conventions by a well-known expert in the field.


Another trade article that gives insight into how the possibilities of technology can be optimized in meetings. It highlights to the planner and sponsor need to understand the implications and consequences particularly from the perspective of the attendee, in order not to be surprised by the outcomes.


This article in the industry periodical describes the aftermath of the 2008 AIG incident which sparked public outrage at the beleagured company’s lavish spending. After the tabloids made known that AIG staged a luxury incentive event at St. Regis California shortly after it took $85million in bail-out money, the US government imposed company-wide policy restrictions pertaining to business travel, events and entertainment on recipients of the Trouble Asset Relief Program (TARP). This combined with media persecution severely dampened the US Meetings industry, and pain was even felt in the U.K., not only from fewer US inbound travelers but also from cutbacks made at the subsidiaries and branch of US companies.

This article introduces how event planners can use “Eventwares”, a set of Web-based tools that allow planners to put critical event planning functions together”, to manage their events more efficiently. The article mainly focuses on 5 aspects of event management: announcement, registration, secure payment, analysis and reporting, and detail management to anatomize the functions of the new technology.

This article showcases the overview of how the evolved “one-stop” event management tool can better facilitate event/meeting planners; however, more experimental studies should be developed.


Interesting and insightful research that evaluated the reasons people attend online and in-person event and the level of people’s engagement in this environment. 479 North American respondent were surveyed. The results show that the level of expected travel for coming year remained the same – 80%. People who generally enjoy traveling do travel more for business. Business travelers expect to access content of the event before, during and after the occasion. Both in-person and online participants multi-task during the event (81% in person vs 83% online). People seek the same information regardless the format of the meeting. “Motivations cited for exhibiting included: brand awareness (68%), new business development (65%), educate market on products/solutions (62%), new lead generation (57%) and thought leadership (51%).” Content and ease of use motivates online attendance. Networking and collaboration motivates online attendance. 78% of in-person attendees versus 33% of virtual attendees indicated that they shared their contact information with others at event. The importance of SM in both types of meetings remain high, it is suggested in research that companies developing strategy for SM concentrate on 1. Content, 2. Connections and networking 3. Experience.


The authors test the hypotheses that the meeting planner's profile has a direct impact on the attitudes toward technology and in turn the extent of its use in their work. The data was collected by questionnaires sent to members of a meeting professional association based in the USA. Both personal and professional profiles were obtained. Results revealed the type of meeting planner and educational level show significant differences attitudes toward computers, the type of computer software utilized and online behaviors.

The article provide insights into the link between meeting planners and the widespread use
of technology in the industry but could be dated given the culture toward technology has shifted substantially in 8 years.

Chandler, Linda C. "Internet and Wifi Services." *Expo Magazine* 2p 22.8 (2010): 49-50. The articles talks about several options that organizers in the MICE industry should consider in order to be able to deal with the increasing demand for internet and wifi services in the us. It also outlines the need of show producers to plan in advance and consider certain factors (the cost of using a streaming video for a general session) before holding an event. And finally it provides information regarding the use of internet and other online services that might be useful for exhibitors and event organizers.


This article by Ben Chapman can be seen as a comprehensive buyer’s guide for technology and meetings. The article examines meetings technology in terms of meetings management and consolidation, online registrations and attendee management, virtual meetings, wireless connectivity and presentation tools. Mr. Chapman reviews and analyzes specific technological tools and documents the use of each product in terms of features, cost, some current users as well as contact information for sales.


The McKinsey Global Institute assesses the economic impact of social technologies in 4 commercial sectors and the social sector by examining the current use of social technologies and their future trends.

Clearly a topic of great interest as society moves well into the so-called collaboration age, the commercial sector is trying to leverage on the opportunities and handle the new challenges of social technologies.


For each component of the business travel such as incentive travel, exhibitions industry, corporate hospitality and individual business travel, the authors provide historical
background with supporting statistics and anecdotal information and brings the reader up-to-date through comparisons with current marketplace. Factors such as supply, demand, intermediaries, issues and trends are examined and tested against highlighted case studies.

A textbook that provides useful reading about business travel in a practical and straightforward manner.


The authors methodically investigate how information and communications technology is used in narrower categories within the MICE sector, and identify trends, uncover implications as well as reveal constraints that arise out of technological advances through the results of a questionnaire survey of meeting organizers in Europe.

This article gives interesting insight into mega trends the industry faces, though having been written ten years ago, some of the findings are somewhat dated.


In this research, the author proposes and validates a measurement model to predict user acceptance of computers. The theoretical foundations of the framework was built on an assessment and convergence of a number of multi-disciplinary theories regarding acceptance of change. The framework posited that perceived use and perceived ease of use had a significant bearing on attitudes, which in turn influenced behavioral intention and ultimately resulted in actual usage.

An foundational research to of the basic dimensions needed to assess user behavior and user adoption of information technology industry was considered an iconic model in its time and now is widely known as “Technology Acceptance Model” or “TAM”.


This is a pilot study that investigates perspectives, challenges and best practices that meeting professionals have experienced in evaluating their meetings. The research includes a survey of corporate meeting professionals on the use of ROI methodologies to
measure the value of meetings, and in-depth interviews of those using the Phillips ROI Methodology – a measurement model adapted to the Meeting Industry. By illustrating the challenges that meeting professionals have in proving the value of their meetings, providing recommendations for the meeting industry, this exploratory research also identifies the critical success factors of applying Phillips ROI model into meeting industry.

This article provides comprehensive background information about the ROI measurement in Meeting Industry, which creates a better understanding of the confusing term of “ROI” and the way to measure it. The in-depth discussion in this study also sheds light on the measurement strategy adopted in the industry.


A research done by the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project, using surveys carried out on American cell phone owners, based on a regular tracking survey which track changes in cell phone activity patterns over time.


This study investigates the use of technology relating to meetings and events, by comparing its three different generations of attendees, in particular targeting Generation Y. The authors triangulated its findings through examining existing literature, attempting to validate through a hotel case study and through a focus group comprising of millennials.

While a few articles highlighted the relationship between the use of technology in meetings with the demographic of the organizer, this research provides a different angle by linking attendee demographics and so brings fresh perspective to the available body of literature on technology and meetings.


This report attempts to provide answers to those interested in creating incentive programs as a response to external forces and events, such as strong fluctuating economic times. It addresses how internal and external factors have shaped incentive travel organizations and also discusses the most appropriate core competencies needed for future success. The authors investigate the best strategies that are likely to be developed in the next five years for successful incentive travel plans and other
successful alternatives that can be implemented to respond to a faltering economy or political instability.


A Research White Paper A qualitative online questionnaire with open-ended question surveyed 1,612 meeting sector stakeholders and examines four areas; technology, meeting design, suppliers, venues and social media, and was supplemented by insights from formal and informal interviews with sector experts and commentators.

A very well researched and interesting paper with a comprehensive literature review that provided valuable findings and some thought provoking insights.


This is a industry report on a Twitter discussion led by Bob James, VP of Touch N’ Go Event Solutions, where he introduces the benefits of Near Field Communication (NFC) and its application in meetings industry. The report covers Bob James’ opinions about NFC’s advantages, current range of implementation in mobile devices, and its future growth. This article offers valuable insights about NFC from the industry.


A powerpoint presentation given at an Incentive Conference in Toronto. The contents of the presentation deal step-by-step with each social media tool and how it can be applied to meetings. It emphasizes the importance of social media use in meetings to engage audiences, outlines lessons learnt and identifies pitfalls to avoid.


The author undertakes an extensive literature review of the concept of communities of practice and proposes an integration with conventions, in order to extend and enhance the educational experience into one that makes learning more meaningful and practical for attendees. Due to geographical and time realities, communities of practice are mostly virtual communities, and the article explores the principles for cultivating these
communities in the context of an association convention.

An interesting addition to the field of work on business meetings and technology, with a special focus on learning and application of knowledge through online communities.


A short article that talks about how the concept of social media in meetings is starting to shift, and gives current examples. A pertinent point brought up was the reluctance with using social media in meetings for companies who dealing in proprietary information and industry regulations.


Research was to find out key criteria of a successful meeting from meeting planners’ perspective and attendees’. The surveys that were conducted on both groups found that security and staff were seen as the critical aspects by both planners and attendees and ranked top. The views of the planner and attendees differed somewhat thereafter. Interestingly, both groups prioritized the meeting room’s sensory aspects over its physical aspects and unsurprisingly, attendees placed more importance on the guest room, food and beverage and location convenience compared to the planners.


This article gives a brief introduction about the history of New Field Communication and NFC Forum. The article covers how NFC technology works, functions of NFC Tags, and the background of NFC-compatible cellphones. This is a good source for understanding NFC technology’s background and history; however, there is limited analytical discussion covered in this article.


http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GITR/2012/GITR_Chapter1.2_2012.pdf

With the proliferation of and widespread use of mobile and smart phones as well as the
advent of cloud computing there is a rapid convergence of information and communication technology. Internet services, telecommunications and media services are converging for both the consumer and the industry. This article published as part of the 2012 Global Information Technology report, examines the Cloud as a catalyst for information-communication convergence from the personal electronic device to internet data communication to broadcast services. The authors theorize that cloud computing will reshape information and communication technology by enhancing each other to produce a consistent experience across any device, anytime, anywhere. Also, the telecommunications and IT industries will continue to integrate services and adopt common standards which will reduce costs, facilitate further development and extend the reach of the Cloud. The authors review the future of smart devices


The first of an annual survey series conducted by the Incentive and Business Travel and Meetings (“IBTM”). The focus for this research is to obtain information on buying trends and the major issues affecting destination choice in the meetings industry from year to year. The survey was completed in June 2012 with responses from 900 American based buyers and 300 suppliers. Summary of trends from the research focusing on the Americas region was presented by the American chapter of the IBTM.


The Mice industry in the US has been heavily affected by a phenomenon known as “AIG effect”. Days After receiving $85 billion from the Federal Reserve, American international group spent $443,000 for an incentive program at the St Regis resort, Monarch Beach in Dana point California. This incentive program was subject of many persecutions and criticisms from the media and public. The articles focuses on the impact of “AIG effect” on incentive programs, conferences and events. It also provides various points of view of executive managers regarding the consequences of AIG effect as well as the measure that should be taken in order to fight this phenomenon.


This survey examined communication and travel patterns of 1411 Norwegian professionals who room based versus internet based videoconferencing. The two groups were formed, one that used VC in conference room and the other that used internet based VC. The findings included that different industries has different preferences for room-based VC an
ICT. The cost of technology for room based VC made it inefficient for smaller companies. The purpose of holding both types of conferences is to facilitate discussion, exchange information. Internet based conferences are used for a wider range of purposes i.e education. Participants turnout is higher in room based VC (71%) over internet based (57%). The survey yielded that both groups are stratified with both types of conference meetings. Significant amount in both groups indicated the positive possibility of videoconferencing substituting the face-to-face meeting (room based 44%, internet based 34%).


A article that begins at the beginning by explaining what social media is, describing the various applications fall under this broad category and presenting ten pieces of advice for companies wanting to take the plunge into social media.


This paper explores the relationship between wireless security and privacy issues, and develops the foundation for metrics with which to develop and examine appropriate policies. The challenge is to get consistent and supportive security and privacy policies. In addition, the adoption of a wireless infrastructure will result in richer sets of information flows, requiring additional resources to achieve the same level of security as in a wired infrastructure. Richer sets of information are also likely to have a negative impact on privacy. This article helps understand the information security issue with regards to the adoption of technology in business.


A study that extended Davis’ Technology Acceptance Model (“TAM”) to examine the motivations behind adoption of smartphones from a user viewpoint. The findings from a telephone survey supported the hypotheses where two new constructs, Perceived Cost Savings and Company’s Willingness to Fund, and two causal relationships, Job Relevance and Experience as moderating effects, were added to the model.

One of the many research using a modified TAM to test the variables leading to a user adoption of a certain technology.

The study is primarily a literature review and opinion piece that focuses on and how the use of smart card management applications can benefit the three principle parties involved in the planning and management of a meeting or convention.

The report is useful for providing basic background of the embedded chip technology and uses a number of hospitality case studies to flesh out strategies employed by these companies and their outcomes.


This is a literature review of articles on the convention and meetings industry published in hospitality and tourism literature. Articles were content-analyzed and identified on five core themes; economic impact, site selection, meeting participation process, destination marketing and advances in technology.

A good bird’s eye view of the body of research on the meetings industry that deals with technological advances.


The author focuses on social media as a tool in support of meetings and conventions and examines the industry professionals' attitudes toward its use against their demographics, as well as the relationships among key technology acceptance constructs. The article opens up the understanding of how social media has been & is being used in this industry and the motivations & inhibiting factors of industry professionals in embracing it.

A timely research piece into social media, a technological trend that is changing the landscape of our world today, its application and attitudes held to it in the meetings sector.


This article looks at the American International Group as a major public disaster that not only
drove the world financial system to the brink of collapse but also tanked the luxury corporate travel market. This article defines the AIG Effect and shows how far reaching the effects were.


This paper presents a system that allows remote and local participants to control devices in a meeting environment using mouse or pen based gestures “through” video window. It also presents the system architecture, implementation tradeoffs, and various meeting control scenarios. It focuses on interactive video techniques to support meetings and teleconferences.

The systems allows a participant or presenter to easily manage presentation, screens, notes and onsite printing by performing gestures over live meeting videos.

This paper helps to understand the crucial role of technology in either offsite or onsite meetings. It can also be helpful for research on the impact of technology on off-site meetings.


A website by a young marketing strategist and consultant with the tagline, “if you don’t innovate, in the long term you die.” A pupil of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory who has contributed two new extensions.


This paper intends to update a performance measurement methodology originally published in 1992 called the “Master Measurement Model (MMM) of Employee Performance, as well as to address how to measure the short and long-term impact and ROI of incentive and recognition plans. After introducing the original MMM and the Phillips ROI Institute Methodology as a metric that is widely used in HR, human capital, people, performance, the study links the Phillips ROI model to incentive plan design with the illustration of an incentive program case study. The case study measures the effectiveness of an incentive program designed to influence employee behavior around plant safety.

This article is helpful in understanding the ROI Model and incentive program design, it also provides valuable resource of Phillips model and its application to an incentive program; however, the application is not directly to the measurement of incentive travel, which makes it only partially applicable to the research.

This book covers a collection of case studies based on real security audits along with the author’s analysis of the real risks in the way systems are installed, configured, supported and management. In addition, the book’s main contention is that security is more about people and policies than about techie details.


This article introduces the benefits of using cloud-based technology in preparing meeting planning documents, and the author believes that cloud enables planners’ power to organize and analyze all of their data in a convenient and cost-effective way.

This article elaborates more details of “cloud’s application in meeting planning and the benefits it may provide for planners; however, practical research on cloud-based technologies’ real efficiency is needed.


Using a methodical review of industry definitions, surveys and studies previously done, the objective of this report was to examine whether the conceptual framework of the Tourism Satellite Account is could be adapted to measure the Meetings Industry, particularly within analysis framework of the National Accounts of countries in which this industry is a prominent activity. The ultimate aim was to contribute to broadening and strengthening the public’s recognition of the Meetings Industry through the initiative of a reputable organization to assess its economic contribution in a credible and consistent manner.

“Meeting challenges.” *Buying Business Travel*, January

This article summarized presentation from Meetings and Incentive Global Forum. This article provides an insight that although technology is being widely used in today’s business world there is still a big gap between what technologies are available at the market of meetings and what technologies the market really needs. This article points out that event planners are facing a challenge providing the right technologies for the meeting to maximize its effectiveness.
This article was brief but useful, as it provides a better understanding of the challenges and a gap that need to be filled in the use of technologies at the meetings.

“Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition (MICE) Industry: Analysis and Opportunities”

With a total value of US $ 1.16 trillion (including US$400 billion for conferences and US$760 billion for exhibitions), the meeting, incentive and convention industry (MICE) is considered as one of the most important industry in the world.
This article highlights statistics that show the economic importance of the MICE industry in general. By focusing on Taiwan, the article analyzes the supply and demand of the MICE industry; the existing gap in the industry supply chain as well as provides advantages for foreign investment in Taiwan

The article gives the economic impact of the MICE industry in general which is useful for any research regarding the industry.


IAPCO is an international association of meeting planners who have to undergo rigorous entry requirements and annual quality assessment in order to be accepted as a member and maintain their standing in the organization respectively. IAPCO publishes an encyclopedia of terms used by the Meetings Industry as a practical tool and overview for meeting professionals, covering every aspect of the services, techniques, organisation and equipment relating to international events. It is regularly updated to cover the growing list of terminology used.


The authors focuses on B2B SME’s social networking practices. They found that social networking was used principally to attract new customers but the main barrier is perceived lack of relevance for certain sectors. The paper highlighted that an overwhelming majority of SMEs do not adopt any metrics to assess effectiveness.

A useful article for understanding the use of social media in a B2B context.

Nowadays people do not have only a single laptop that needs internet access or a simple phone just for answering calls. They are increasingly carrying on multiples devices and expect to use them everywhere they are. The articles highlight efforts made by event organizers to provide good and reliable wireless services to attendees during events. The articles also mention the consequences related to the user saturations at venues. These consequences include dropped calls and unavailability of network.

The article is very helpful for our research on the use of technology in offsite events since Wifi has been identified as essential component in most of events.


A marketing book that is hailed as the guide with the game plan for bringing cutting-edge products to progressively larger markets. In particular the author deals with marketing using technology.

A worthy read with its basis in Roger’s Diffusion of Innovation theory.


This article gives a brief introduction on tablet devices’ potential in being environmental friendly, where they save relatively more energy and paper than regular PCs. While this article supports tablets as enablers for “green” meetings, its advantages in enhancing traditional meetings are to be discovered.


Results of a National Business Travel Association Survey of 119 corporate travel managers conducted in 2009, the article collected information and was a factual report of the results of the survey intended primarily to measure the impact of the AIG effect on business meetings, incentive events and travel in the United States.

This article talks about the history, development, and functions of NFC technology, as well as its implications in various areas. The author holds a strong belief in NFC’s dominance in future wireless communication, where discussions about NFC’s advantages over other wireless communication technologies are included. This is a valuable resource to get a concise understanding of NFC technology.


This article gives a comprehensive overview of NFC technology: the overall technology description, its functions, drivers of its popularity among various industries, and its infrastructure are all illustrated. Additionally, a deep discussion about its safety issues is also developed. This article is helpful to understand NFC in a deeper level.


This article considers the evaluation of business meetings and events. A case study is used to examine the current evaluation methodology. By analysing the data collected, the author shows to what extent the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of attendees was influenced by their participation in the conference and concludes with key points for organisations considering evaluating business events and meetings.

An illuminating article assessing and comparing meeting evaluation methods through the use of a Geneva conference as a case study.


This is a short report summarizing the speech on tablets given by Todd Barr, chief marketing officer of Alfresco; which highlights the main benefits of using tablets during business meetings such as allowing interaction, avoiding oversimplification, and forcing audiences to focus. However, if the benefits above-mentioned are widely shown in meetings needs to be further proved.

This explanatory article illustrates the differences between QR Codes and NFC Tags, and discusses each technology’s pros and cons. This is a valuable source for analyzing NFC’s effectiveness compared to other wireless communication technologies, especially QR codes.


This is a short summary of the survey on Tablets’ users conducted by Alfresco, a content platform provider. While this report suggests the popularity of Tablets aroused among business meetings, more details about the drivers behind the trend needs to be discovered.


This research examined the awareness, acceptance and adoption for virtual reality applications for business purposes and to see whether virtual versions of meetings and special events are a viable option permitting the attainment of organizational goals and objectives.


A short magazine article interviewing the 2 founders of a consulting company about the ways in which meeting planners can make use of social media, the advantages and the risks. There are also suggested measurement metrics to see how well the social media strategy is working.


This article discusses the purposes and benefits of evaluating a meeting, presents the model developed by Phillips that describes six levels of evaluation and data collected within each level, identifies possible data sources and data collection methods, and illustrates how to formulate questions for data collection instruments. The author suggests
that it is crucial to collect valid and realistic data from meeting population; therefore, proper design of the measurement for meetings is necessary for meeting professionals.

This article is helpful for understanding how to conduct an appropriate evaluation in meeting industry; it also provides valuable resource for the history and background of Phillips model. However, there is limited discussion regarding the popularity of the model in reality.


This chapter identifies the reasons for calculating the ROI on meetings, describes the criteria for an effective ROI process, compares and contrasts techniques to isolate the effects of meetings, and lists the methods used to convert meeting benefits to monetary value.

This article provides a comprehensive process for calculating ROI of meetings, also addresses the importance of selecting the right level of evaluation to meet the particular objective of each meeting.


A report prepared by Oxford Economics for the U. S Travel Association which examines business travel in the U.S. centering on the question of what is the relationship of business travel to company profits. Findings were obtained through surveys of corporate executives and business travelers as well as an econometric analysis of business travel on corporate performance. The key to the research was ascertaining the benefits of business travel, which includes meetings and events, and drawing the connection between business travel and bottom line.


This study intended to examine whether applications of technology in meetings such as web Conferences, videoconferences can replace the face-to-face meetings. By conducting a survey distributed to 750 business executives who have experienced “travel down, technology up” since the 2008 recession, study show that the majority of executives still believe face-to-face meetings are still crucial for building stronger, more meaningful and profitable business relationships.
This report reveals business executives’ opinions on the necessity of face-to-face meetings regardless of the increasing availability of technologies, which brings valuable insights to respond to the research question. However, the report is fundamentally based on executives’ subjective opinions, metrics of the ROI of meetings are to be further explored to support the research.


The article talks about how hotels are investing a huge amount of money to provide modern high tech boardrooms as part of conference and meeting room facilities. Today boardrooms are not longer only look aesthetically pleasing with expensive millwork, granite and wood conference tables and leather chairs but they are also well equipped with high technology such as high-tech audio visual equipment, flat panel Televisions, projectors, microphones and surround sound systems to make any board meeting an effective one. The article focuses on technology used in Boardrooms at hotels.

This article is relevant in the sense that, it helps to understand how technologies allow hotels to increase their revenues.


This book provided a comprehensive introduction to the key elements of business events as represented by the MICE industry. The author examined this topic from its origins right down to its future development. It was suggested that a strong focus on the design, execution and measurement of meetings and conventions would impact its participants more purposefully and create greater value for stakeholders. He also emphasized the role events play in economic, professional and educational development.

A crucial resource for understanding the background of the MICE industry and the key issues grappled with.

Rogers, Everett M. *Diffusion of Innovations*. Free Press. 1 Feb 1995.

First published in 1962, Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation has become a standard textbook on diffusion studies. The book proposed 4 main elements that influence the spread of a new idea: the innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system. Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. The author theorized that individuals progress through 5 stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Rogers classified individuals within a social system based on innovativeness; categories of
adopters were innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. This and resulted in the famous S curve popularized by textbooks have made his ideas widely known in the marketing world.


This web article is a commentary on Research conducted by Corporate Meetings & Incentives and the Incentive Research Foundation. The author notes the trend of the incorporation of the business meeting element into the incentive travel program.


This article gives an overview of the various aspects of security that should be taken into account for NFC technology, including eavesdropping, data corruption and manipulation, interception attacks, and theft. Security issues addressed in this article is useful for discussions about NFC’s ramifications.


The study sought to provide insight to incentive travel programs and the benefits derived from successful programs. This case study defines incentive travel programs and discusses the purpose and benefits both to the employees, in terms of increased motivation and the managers who view these programs as a mean to building corporate culture which translates into financial success. The study provides an objective view of the benefits that can be derived from a well-designed incentive travel program.

This case study was important because it identifies and evaluates the impact incentive travel programs have on an organization from both the employees' and employers' perspective


The second annual global survey conducted by a global law firm regarding the use of social media in the workplace. The report is primarily focused on understanding business attitudes to social media and evolving laws to regulate developments on the virtual frontline including usage at the workplace as a business strategy, by employees on both
personal and professional levels. It also discusses how companies deal with legal issues that arise and provides country specific laws and regulations.

An extensive guide to understand, avoid and handle the emerging legal issues arising from social media.


As a chapter included in the official textbook dedicated to professional meeting planners, this article gives a comprehensive introduction of the current technologies being used by meeting managers, covering various aspects of the professional meeting management. In addition, the author also opines that “wireless” and “mobile” are the leading trends in the industry.

The article is useful for understanding the current technologies and their dynamics being used in the industry, the commentaries of the specific technology being used offers valuable professional inputs for the research.

http://www.meetings-conventions.com/articles_ektid38414.aspx?page=1

As current trends in meetings technology gain more traction across the industry, this article by Michael J Shapiro discusses the likely changes that they will bring, by consulting with several forward-thinking tech experts to share their projections. The article highlighted the following trends; first, mobile apps for events will become true revenue generators. The value is measured in the form of requested information, downloaded documents, click-throughs and the like, allowing exhibitors and event planners to collect analytics about how many attendees are using the app. Second, events will be one piece of a larger communications strategy. Social media and digital technology give event planners the tools to extend events over weeks and months, so content and ideas can be spread out further and more easily absorbed. Third, contact information exchange will become more streamlined. This could theoretically occur with the progressive uptake of NFC technology such that two smartphones that have NFC, regardless of brand, could exchange data, which can then be processed by other applications running on each phone. Fourth, virtual components will become more engaging. This includes a lot more professional video production in the virtual components of hybrid events, along with multiple cameras and angles to engage the attendees, creating an experience that will become more like watching TV.

In this case study of a publishing company, the authors found three main strategic implications of mobile technology; namely it improves working process, increases internal communication and knowledge sharing and enhances sales and marketing effectiveness.


The study examines the similarities and differences between 3 generational groups in terms of what motivates and inhibits meeting attendance through a survey of professional associations. Key motivators were Career Advancement, Overall Cost, Social Interaction and Open Schedule while key inhibitors were Costs, Program Design, Location and Family/Work Conflicts. The research revealed that contrary to literature, motivations and inhibitors to conference attendance were relatively similar.

This is another demographics comparison that concentrates motivates or inhibits meeting attendees and although not directly linked to the topic of meeting and technology, should prove useful starting points from which to consider how technology could address these core needs and issues.


This study not only gives a background to the historical evolution of incentive travel and its rationale, it seeks to update and broaden understanding by surveying both users non users of travel incentives from the perspective of the corporation. In addition it reports on characteristics of incentive travel by Fortune 1000 companies that use it and their motivations for use.

A interesting article that provides valuable insights particularly for those planning, promoting and selling incentive travel.

ICCA is a leading trade association for suppliers of all kinds of goods and services to the International Meetings Industry, primarily comprised of destination marketers, meetings managers, meetings support, transport and venues. The report is an annual publication put together by the Research department to collect and rank data to aid their members in making decisions. The criteria for the data is that the meetings have to been organized by international associations which take place on a regular basis and rotate between a minimum of three countries.

Because of the criteria of meetings data collected, the report is focused on a relatively small subset of all global meetings, but it provides an interesting snapshot of the leading countries or cities that focus on this sub-segment and identifies notable trends over a 10 year period.


The 2 authors shares theoretical concepts, combined with practical case studies, to explain about the business tourism market and its design, its social, economic and environmental impacts, marketing and ethics as well as new technologies used in this area.

A easy to understand textbook that covers a relatively neglected part of tourism.


An executive summary which sets out the results from an Economy Significance Study by Price Waterhouse Coopers. The research was done on the basis of definitions of Meetings, and methodology to quantify Meeting Activity as recommended by United Nations World Tourism Organization in 2006, to ensure a consistent measurement for comparison against those of other countries. Primary data was collected through surveys from a wide spectrum of players, both supply and demand side of meetings (6000 surveys), and secondary data from industry, government and proprietary sources, and were analyzed, reconciled and exercised some professional judgement and industry experience to develop the basis for the estimates of economic significance.

This is a fairly recent research effort that sheds light into the contribution of the Meetings industry to the U.S economy in more concrete dollar terms.

This article describes top five technologies for event planners including smartphones, SaaS (software as a service) Cloud Apps, virtual events, social media and virtual marketing, and tablets. The article does not only introduce the basic functions of these technologies, but also discusses how they are used in meetings. This is a valuable article to help identify the trends of technologies used in meetings.


A blog created by a incentive travel consultant based in Toronto, Canada, that discusses topical industry happenings and shares expert advice.

One of the more interesting articles written by the author had to do with her observations and analysis of the AIG event and provides insights from an insider’s viewpoint.


This article is useful for examining the use of A/V systems in meetings, discussions regarding appropriate selections of A/V equipment used in specific meetings also provide valuable insights to the research. However, more updated information about A/V equipment is needed to enrich the existing findings in this article.


This article aims to acquaint the meeting manager with the issues to consider regarding the application of A/V, where discussions of the key areas of implementing A/V including audio, visual display, lighting, and specialty systems are presented. In addition, strategies for planning the meeting with the use of A/V in an efficient and cost-effective manner are illustrated.

This article is useful for examining the use of A/V systems in meetings, discussions regarding appropriate selections of A/V equipment used in specific meetings also provide valuable insights to the research. However, more updated information about A/V equipment is needed to enrich the existing findings in this article.

The author of this article takes a look at the incentive travel market at the close of 2010 and makes predictions on what can be expected in 2011 in terms of budget cuts and the effects (both negative and positive) these cuts will have on the industry.


Joint survey between Corporate Meetings and Incentives and the Incentive Research Foundation. Findings of interest include social media use and effects of the economic decline in incentive events.


This paper is a brief to introduce the concept Meeting Architecture which is coined by the author, a consultant for innovative meanings. Meeting Architecture posits an approach to meeting design and format that has the outcome of increasing the value stakeholders obtain from their investment in meetings, rather than a focus on logistics and hospitality.


The authors examine the structures and functions of organizational meetings as a basic for the 2 following objectives. To develop a better understanding of the information needs of different types of meetings and to formulate a basis for evaluating the successes, failures and potential for current & future information systems technology.


This web-page gives an overall description of the ARS (Audience Response System), and introduces the functions of the ARS products Meridiaars provides for its consumers. Although it’s a product introduction page with its commercial purpose, it is valuable for understanding the ARS’ application in meetings.

Using the Delphi technique, this study establishes the principal business, social, technology and political trends affecting the Convention Industry. Additionally it discusses their impacts and highlights similarities and differences between the United Kingdom, which is a more mature convention destination, and Australia, a recent entrant into the market.

A relatively interesting research that provides background of the unique characteristics of the Meetings industry and its past challenges, and in light of that, identifies major trends that are expected to shape the industry.


This exploratory study aims to endorse the more extensive adoption of the ARS technology by universities and colleges and the effectiveness of this technology. Results are presented to suggest that the one-way communication lectures may be discarded in favor of class meetings that are more interactive with the course content with the ARS.

The results of this study imply that there is a greater prospect of critical thought and deeper learning with the assistance from ARS that allows quality group discussion. While the research is conducted within the academic setting, the results are also valuable for analyzing ARS’ applications in offsite meetings with education and communication purposes.


Another trade article that talks about social media at meetings. There are interesting examples of social media use pre, during and post event, with a number of experts and consultants interviewed for their practical advice.