



event apps: the current statistics

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In the information age, the roles played by technology and data have transformed industries of every kind.

Not only have developments brought about by media and technology delivered new and exciting things to the consumer, they have also managed to do so in an environment which promises companies feedback and valuable usage statistics.

It seems that recent technological advances have happened upon a road to happiness, where both consumers and suppliers can benefit.

Technology has touched every corner of business, and events are no exception. In a world of social media and immediate digital connectivity, it's easy to see why event organisers are keen to look to the digital world for ways to get greater longevity from individual sessions.

Of course, the idea of feedback and improved customer experience is not new in the world of business. For a long time, facilitators have sought responses from consumers in an effort to better the services they provide. Today, the use of apps is ready to take this concept to the next level and nowhere is their benefit being felt more pointedly than in the world of events.

Here, we take a closer look at how apps are taking the events world by storm. Through the use of some telling statistics, we'll take a look at what these apps do now and what they might do in the future in order to consider the best ways for events managers to implement apps in coming months.





what are event apps?

Whether it's an industry trade show, a conference or a road show, the logistics of all events are dependent on the communication of certain information to all attendees.

With trade show exhibitors placing relationship building within their top 3 event goals, the need to invest in attendee communication is clear.

Traditionally, this information has been supplied in paper, on the day. A typical welcome pack might contain an itinerary, a map, and some profiles of key figures taking part in the event. This collected information is necessary for attendees to plan their own event and to get the most from what's on offer. It's also a great opportunity for the event's sponsor to say a word or two.

Event apps look to incorporate all of this into a mobile medium. While this is a relatively new approach, it's catching on fast as the benefits are not hard to spot. Just look at the uptake. To date, more than 60% of meeting professionals are already making use of apps to help their events run more smoothly.

So what is it that they're all looking to take advantage of?

what are the **benefits?**

Events are incredibly important in every industry. With B2B marketers allocating 20% of their budget to events , it's easy to see why they are keen to maximise ROI for each event.

The adoption of apps as part of the event planning process is part of an attempt to move away from the idea of disposable events, and towards sessions which inspire peripheral action and longevity.

When asked about the biggest benefits of using an app as an organisation tool, the responses of events companies were clear. By far the most common responses to their question of how to describe apps used for meetings and events centred on convenience. 15% of respondents also stated their wish to encourage engagement through the use of an app .

The superior convenience of an app, compared to paper, is easy to see. Not only is the information physically easier to carry in its digital form but it can also be distributed instantly and, if the organisers should wish, in advance of the event.

Some 12% of users said that their primary reason for using an app was that it would save on the cost of paper printing .

Of course, this cost is both financial and environmental. Savings at a recent National Neurotrauma Society Symposium are estimated at a whopping 4,056lbs of CO2, based on 667 attendees . The benefits don't stop there. It's common knowledge that these financial and environmental benefits can soon be transformed into a positive brand image.

In addition to providing information about the event such as session descriptions and speaker profiles, apps can offer a lot more to attendees than traditional information packs. Indeed, among the most popular features of event apps are the unique opportunities presented with regard to schedule building and networking.

19% of users have said that the ability to schedule is the most important feature of their event app. Needless to say, this is made possible by the smartphone. Similarly, the 10% of people who listed attendee networking as the most important feature of their app are indebted to the connectivity which smartphones provide. The chance to link to social media profiles is another powerful opportunity in this respect.

This is the brilliance of event apps. They build on two pre-existing technologies – the provision of key information and the powerful computers which all attendees own.

In a way, event attendees are actually reducing costs for event managers by providing their own tools.





app adoption

In theory, any event can benefit from an app.

The extent to which a given event will benefit from using an app will vary depending on a whole family of factors: the number of attendees, the range of activities on offer, the demographics in attendance.

Some of the most telling adoption statistics show that the use of event apps is more evident in certain industries.

Trade shows are leading the pack in event app adoption by some way, with 86% already using an app. This could be attributed to the fact that the provision of a show app is part funded by sponsorship and is a way of driving ROI and added value to the sponsors.

Other keen industries include association management, engineering and finance all of which are well funded industries which are often keen to try something new. As the success of event apps in these industries is established, there's good reason to believe that adoption will spread.

At first glance, the industries where adoption is slower might appear surprising – IT, government, and the medical industry. Reasoning becomes clearer, however, when we consider the factors which people are citing as lying in the way of adoption.

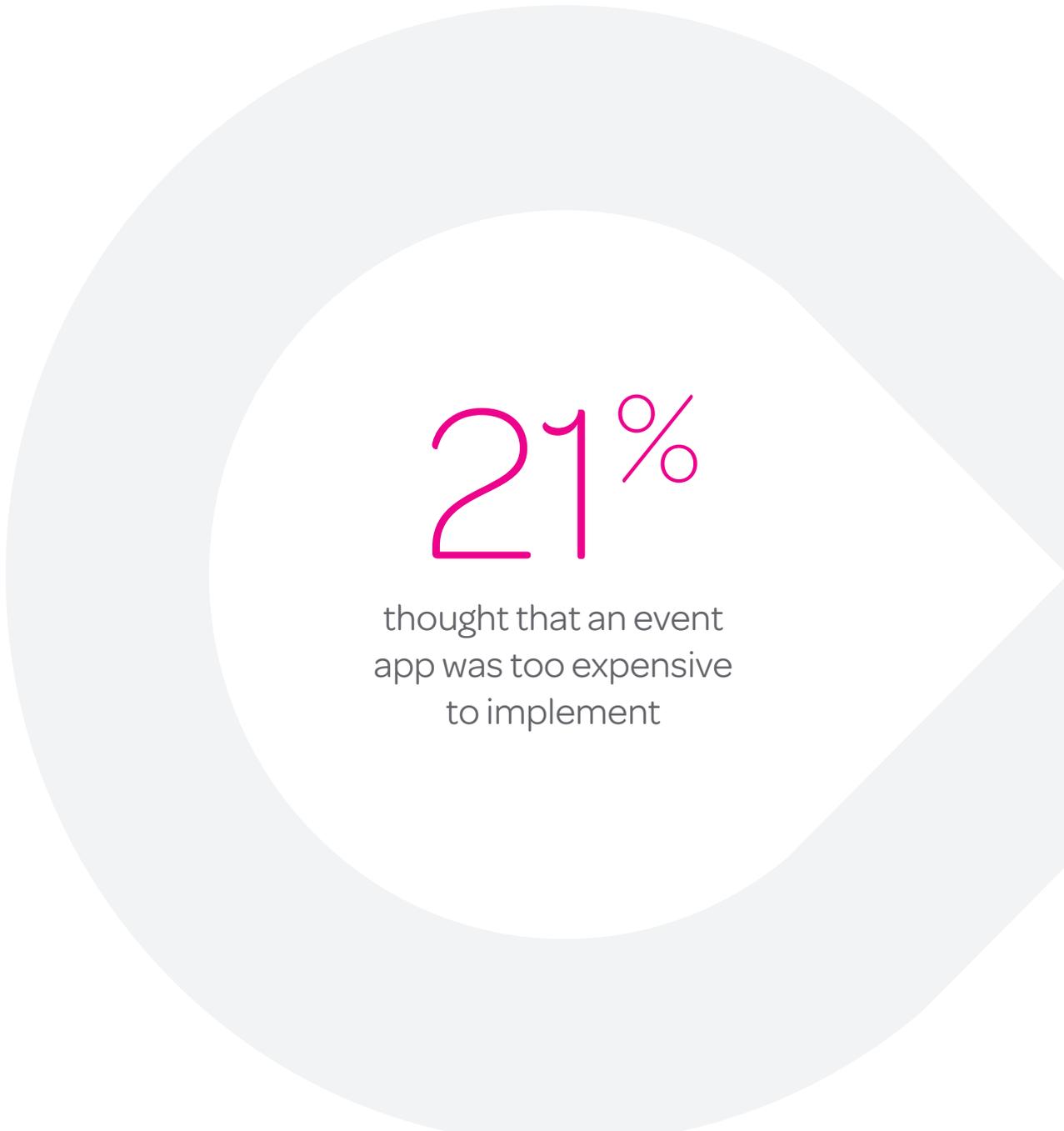
barriers

The successful adoption of an app could well require a number of barriers to be overcome.

An obvious, and surprisingly common, problem has to do with simple connectivity. One of the two most commonly named barriers to adoption among marketers is Wi-Fi accessibility. In the event that organisers are unable to secure Wi-Fi at the venue of an event, offline content could still prove valuable to attendees.

More than one fifth (21%) thought that an event app was too expensive to implement with a further 14% stating that they have been unable to allocate sufficient budgeting. Stricter external regulation in these industries (IT, government and medicine) might therefore explain why they have been slower to adopt event apps.

With a combined 35% citing budget issues and 25% suggesting that current technology does not yet meet their needs, there is plenty of scope for event apps to become more common in these industries moving forward. This projection is based on the growing awareness of the long term financial benefit to using apps, as well as the technological development which is inevitable.



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compatibility

The first thing to understand is compatibility.

Despite Android's market share having risen to a dominant 84.4% in 2014's third quarter, the market is still split across a variety of devices and operating systems. Catering for all major kinds of mobile operating system for your event app is a smart step in this regard.

While BlackBerry's market share has fallen to a dismal 0.5%, it might be worth considering whether this number might be different in your industry?

Knowing your demographic is key and you don't want to alienate most of your attendees purely because their smartphone manufacturer of choice is experiencing a decline in the industry overall. This news won't necessarily matter to your customers and it shouldn't matter to you either if you have catered for all eventualities when scoping and building your app.

implementation

Event apps are a powerful tool, but only if harnessed properly. Like anything else in business, if they are approached in the wrong way it could end up being costly, time consuming and clumsy during the actual event. With this in mind, we move on to consider how best to implement event apps.





promotion

The next hurdle for an event manager is promotion of the app. Fortunately, many of the hurdles usually associated with app promotion are removed for event management.

For example, the once daunting statistic that 26% of downloaded apps had only ever been used once is of no worry. As an events manager, you need to sell the app to your attendees for just that one event or perhaps a series of events.

Bearing this in mind, a large majority of traditional app promotion wisdom goes out the window. The key to seeing the highest number of users at a given event is to build your app promotion into a strong digital infrastructure.

Before an event has begun, attendees should have the option to be included in mailing lists which give previews, offer early information and – most crucially of all – make people aware of the event app. The app should also be mentioned frequently as part of your blogging and brand storytelling across multiple digital formats.

As well as encouraging attendees to interact with the app before the event, it's worth paying attention to pre and post-event content. In the interests of longevity and getting the most from your event investment, it could be for example worth offering exclusive summary content in the days and weeks following your event. Learn to engage with your audience prior to the event and maximise on the networking capabilities of the app. This is where an app can really boost event ROI.

In a recent survey among marketers, it was found that 75% were keen to make use of the app prior to the event, with 78% looking to use an app to maintain a dialogue with attendees.

financing

Returning to the fact that one of the biggest barriers to event app adoption is financing (according to a combined 35% of respondents).

It's worth saying something about how to fit an event app into your budget. This comes down to two things: sponsorship and the improvement of services.

We've already mentioned the power of sponsors within an app. Whether you opt for a headline sponsor or a number of sponsors at a smaller fee, an app represents a great opportunity not only to fund itself but potentially to monetise itself on a grander scale.

Additionally, funding for the app could be offset by dispensing of 'traditional' collateral such as print material. Printing is expensive, time consuming, and can be logistically tricky to manage. We shouldn't need to mention all those dead trees and the huge wastage. By using an event app you can cut printing dramatically, or completely.

Once you've secured the funding for initial investment, it's worth looking to the future to understand your return. ROO and ROI are not always easy to calculate. For example, if one of the event objectives was around customer acquisition then the ROO and associated ROI may take many months to attribute and calculate depending on sales conversation time scales. However, the data you've provided from your event app is sure to filter into your improvement and streamlining of existing strategies and event resources.

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feedback

Using event apps isn't only about the present; it's also about the future.

The use of feedback can help event planners get the most out of future events. This feedback might consist of analytics data which you've pulled from past events or it might be based on more traditional information obtained via the app or otherwise.

Data can tell stories about attendee engagement by showing you which elements of your event were the most popular. It's possible to delve deeper however by creating polls within the app. Rather than using these polls simply as data farms, you might consider working them into the event. With real time responses, you can give attendees feedback on who they are and what they're saying about the event.





what does the future hold?

The future for event apps looks bright, with adoption projected to soar to 85% within the next 6-12 months.

With mobile app usage still on the rise, there's no reason why event apps shouldn't look to build on their current success.

The future, and the real power, of event apps lies in their ability to collect data. While their primary objective is to provide attendees with key information about the event, event apps also possess a powerful ability to provide usage data back to the event organiser.

Just as advertisers are able to track the movement and engagement of online visitors, so too are event organisers able to observe and understand the way in which attendees interact with events. Successful event organisers have been doing this manually for years, but new, digital possibilities are broadening the horizon almost endlessly.

Ultimately, this collection of usage data is a means to improving future events. If event organisers can understand which speakers were popular, as well as which features of the app were most used, they can implement changes based on concrete responses. These might even be monitored in real-time, enabling event organisers to direct their events with utter precision and efficiency.

a final word

The digital revolution is in full swing. According to the Telegraph, mobile has overtaken TV as the most popular way to consume media, with the average UK adult consuming over 3.5 hours per day via mobile, tablet or PC devices, compared to 3.25 hours via traditional TV.

This trend is emphasised by OFCOMs findings that now 93% of UK Adults now own or use a personal mobile phone and 61% of them are now smartphone owners (compared to 51% in Q1 2013).

With these trends developing so clearly, rapidly and universally, business leaders simply cannot remain unstirred. Any successful piece of modern marketing or communication must utilise the mobile world, and events management is no exception.

We've seen how properly implemented event apps can not only make events significantly more convenient for attendees but how they can provide managers with vast amounts of incredibly powerful information.

The bottom line is that events in all industries have a great deal to take from the use of apps and the growing levels of app adoption are testament to that fact.

Resources

- i <http://www.tsnn.com/news-blogs/16-powerful-stats-value-trade-shows>
- ii 'The state of Event Apps' by MPI Research
- iii <http://ativsoftware.com/downloads/BuyersGuide-Event-Apps-White-Paper-ATIV.pdf>
- iv <http://www.quickmobile.com/resources/white-paper/2014-review-mobile-event-technology-research>
- v <http://www.idc.com/prodserv/smartphone-os-market-share.jsp>
- vi <http://thenextweb.com/entrepreneur/2013/08/17/how-to-grow-adoption-and-engagement-for-your-mobile-app/>
- vii <http://www.quickmobile.com/company/press/global-research-mobile-event-apps-increasingly-strategic-meeting-planners>
- viii <http://blog.showgizmo.com/2014/11/20/10-ways-to-get-an-app-at-your-event-without-cutting-the-coffee-budget/>
- ix <http://mashable.com/2014/01/14/mobile-app-use-2013/>
- x <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/mobile-phones/10702488/Mobile-overtakes-TV-as-most-popular-way-to-consume-media.html>
- xi <http://media.ofcom.org.uk/facts/>

about penguins

Penguins very simply make your event happen. We aim to be there for you from start to finish, and beyond.

We're a vibrant event agency with heaps of creative ideas. With over 30 years of event history we really do know how events can be used to make a difference within your communications, sales or marketing strategies.

Managing over 300 events per year in the UK and Internationally, our sole purpose is to provide you with the right resources to create an engaging event. With our experience we can bring your vision to life!



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