



Heading Toward Sustainable Event Management in Vietnam Based on Examples from Finland

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Abstract

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<p>In recent years, the event industry has experienced tremendous growth but has also left significant carbon footprints behind. To mitigate negative environmental, social, and economic impacts while still delivering an exceptional experience for the attendees, sustainable event management has emerged as an important consideration for event organizers worldwide. This study aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities for sustainable event management practices in Vietnam by examining insights from literature, leading events in Finland, and the experiences of Vietnamese professionals.</p> <p>Theoretical section covered components such as the definition of sustainability, different events impacts, and the emerging sustainable event management concept. The study employed qualitative research method to investigate the cultural and societal differences between the two countries, and their influence on the adoption and implementation of sustainable event management practices in Vietnam. Primary research data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Secondary data was mainly synthesized from academic literature, open publications, and industry reports.</p> <p>The findings revealed that the event industry in Vietnam prioritizes spectacle and budget over sustainability, with limited awareness of responsible practices, inadequate infrastructures, and regulatory support systems. In contrast, Finnish events prioritize meaningful content and minimalism, with a strong focus on environmentally friendly practices, supported by good public transportation, sufficient responsible partners and suppliers, digital tools, and waste classification systems. The study suggested a series of sustainable applications and practical examples which are easy to apply, suitable for local context, and provide potential economic benefits. It is strongly recommended that event organizers in Vietnam adopt a long-term approach, engage in continuous communication, and invest in education to promote sustainable practices and shift the cultural preference for grandeur events.</p>
Key words Vietnam, Finland, Sustainability, Event management.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The event industry has seen tremendous growth in recent years, with events of all kinds being organized all over the world. However, this growth has come at a cost, with many events leaving behind significant carbon footprints and contributing to environmental degradation. In response to this, sustainable event management has emerged as an important consideration for event organizers worldwide. The aim of sustainable event management is to reduce the negative environmental, social, and economic impacts of events while still delivering an exceptional experience for the attendees.

Finland is a country that has made significant progress in the area of sustainable event management. There have been a lot of event organizers implementing eco-friendly practices and sustainable solutions. In contrast, in many other parts of the world, such as Vietnam, sustainable event management still lies as a comparatively new concept.

The thesis explores the current state of sustainable event management in Finland and identifies practices that can be applied in Vietnam. Specifically, this thesis will investigate the challenges and opportunities faced by event organizers in Finland and how they have implemented sustainable event management practices. The research will also examine the cultural and economic factors that influence sustainable event management in Vietnam. From these investigations and supplement literature review, the thesis aims to identify strategies that can be used to overcome these barriers and difficulty in Vietnamese context.

The author's research aims to contribute to broader academic and practical efforts to promote sustainable development in the event industry. Specifically, they seek to identify the key principles and strategies that can be applied to promote sustainable event management practices in Vietnam. These strategies include waste reduction and recycling, energy efficiency, carbon offsetting, sustainable transportation, and stakeholder engagement. Through a comprehensive literature review and qualitative case study analysis of Finnish event companies, the author will evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting sustainable event management practices and identify opportunities for further improvement.

By comparing and contrasting those approaches used in Finland and Vietnam, this thesis will contribute to the wider body of knowledge on sustainable event management and provide insights into how this concept can be applied in different cultural and economic contexts.

1.2 Justifying the choice of the topic

The author's decision to explore sustainable event management practices in Vietnam is informed by personal experience working in the event production industry in the country. The author worked in a number of grand events in Vietnam, such as Miss Grand International 2017, Mon Asian Food Festival 2018 and Toyota Junior Football Clinic and Camp in the summer 2018. These events were multifaceted events that comprised of various smaller events and conferences, ranging in size and scale. Through these events, the author gained insights in different aspects of event management, including logistics, marketing, and customer service. She understood that each operation, no matter how small, plays a crucial role in the overall success of the event, and every detail must be carefully planned and executed to ensure that the event runs smoothly and successfully. At the same time, the author witnessed extensive negative impacts which were left on the environment and to the local communities. From excessive food leftover and material waste generation, noise pollution to traffic jam, the Vietnamese event industry definitely has a long way to go in terms of sustainable practices.

Currently pursuing a degree in Tourism and Event Management at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, the author is keenly aware of the importance of promoting sustainable tourism and event management practices. In particular, the author is interested in understanding how Finnish event companies have achieved sustainability in their sustainable management practices, given Finland's reputation as a global leader in sustainable tourism. By examining and adapting the strategies employed by these companies, the author believes that suitable practices for implementing in the context of Vietnam can be identified. Furthermore, the author recognizes that promoting sustainable event management practices can contribute to the economic sustainability of the Vietnamese event industry. By attracting environmentally conscious customers and partners, event organizers can create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

The author hopes her research will provide early valuable insights and practical recommendations to event organizers in Vietnam on implementing sustainable event management practices. Additionally, the author aims to raise awareness among all stakeholders in Vietnam about the importance of sustainable event management practices and how they can contribute to promoting sustainability. Ultimately, the author's research aims to contribute to the broader global effort to promote sustainability in the event industry and to advance our understanding of effective implementation of sustainable practices in diverse cultural and economic contexts.

1.3 Thesis structure

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis, including the justification for the chosen topic, describing the thesis's main methods and its structure. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework from various books, articles and reports, covering sustainability and sustainable development, events and their impacts as well as concept of sustainable event management. Chapter 3 focuses on sustainable event management in Helsinki, Finland, providing case studies of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Slush, Messukeskus, and Flow Festival. Chapter 4 examines the current situation of sustainable management in Vietnam, providing an overview of the country's efforts in this area. Chapter 5 explains the research approach and data collection method. Chapter 6 identifies obstacles when applying sustainable event management in Vietnam and suggests some potential practices for local adoption. Chapter 7 summarizes the key findings, provides analysis and present personal learning reflection to conclude the thesis.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter will provide an overview of sustainability and sustainable development, following by a discussion of the impacts that events can have on the economy, socio and environment. The third sub-chapter of this section will introduce the concept of sustainable event management.

2.1 Sustainability and sustainable development

According to the report by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, there are environmental trends that constitute a major threat to the earth and the species that inhabit it, including humans. For example, the paper states that each year, around six million hectares of productive dryland are converted into unproductive desert, an area nearly like Saudi Arabia if this trend continues for three decades. Moreover, nearly 11 million hectares of forest are lost each year, which would equal an area roughly the size of India if continued over the same time span. This deforestation frequently results in poor-quality farmland that cannot support the farmers who reside there. Furthermore, the paper states that acid precipitation in Europe kills forests and lakes while also destroying nations' cultural and architectural history. In fact, it is hypothesized that enormous swaths of soil may be acidified beyond repair. The combustion of fossil fuels emits carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, producing slow global warming. (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) As our global population continues to grow and natural resources become scarcer, it is becoming increasingly clear that we need to find ways to live and develop in a more feasible manner.

There are several definitions for the term “sustainability” and “sustainable development”, depending on who is defining it and why it is being defined (Holmes, Hughes, Mair & Carlsen 2015). However, due to the continuous discussions on the usage and interpretation of the term "sustainability," as well as the disingenuous marketing that has damaged its reliability, “some might dismiss sustainability as vague rhetoric” (Mair & Smith 2021).

The most popular definition of “sustainable development” was published in the report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Report. In the report, sustainable development is a development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). This definition has been cited by several authors when exploring the topics of sustainable event practices and this definition continues to be used to this day.

Previously, there were simply three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. Culture was proposed at the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders – 3rd World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) as the fourth pillar to honour cultural variety and the importance of cultural policy in promoting long-term human development. To achieve sustainability, we must examine these intricately related components of sustainability (Jones 2014), as “main elements underpinning human society” (Holmes & al. 2015). While dealing with environmental challenges, economic and social/cultural factors must be considered (Figure 1). When assessing economic success, it is essential to consider fairness and inequity, social results, cultural context, and the absence of resource depletion or environmental deterioration (Jones 2014).

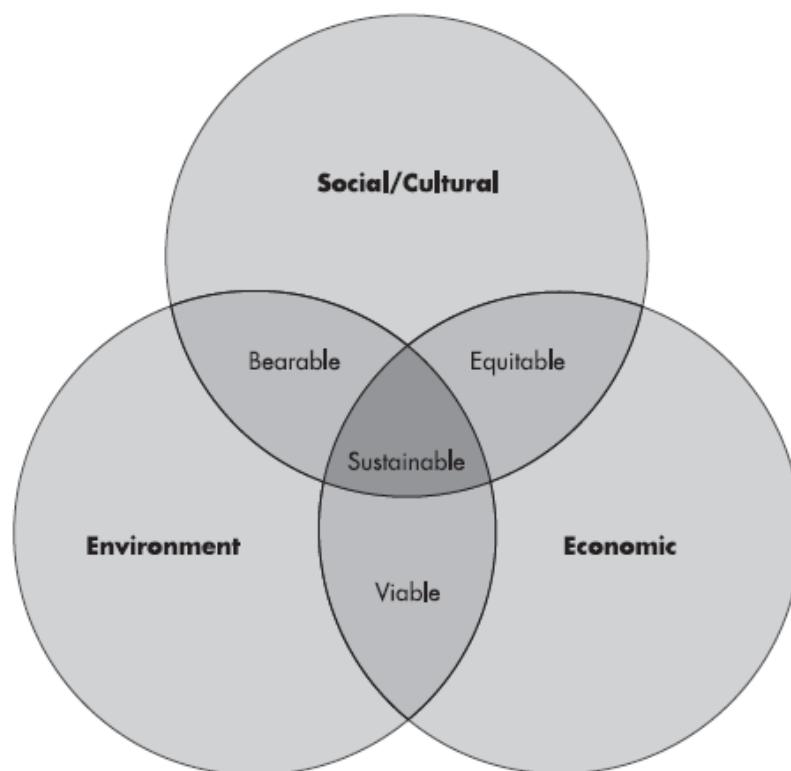


Figure 1. Sustainability interactions. (Jones 2017)

That is, the following consecutive accomplishments are required to achieve sustainable development: (Holmes & al. 2015)

Economic sustainability manifests itself in the shape of viable firms and related economic activities that can be sustained over time.

Social/Cultural sustainability is defined as a society that is founded on ethical and equitable ideals such as equal opportunity and human rights, the preservation and enhancement of local communities and their social support systems, and the absence of exploitation.

Environmental sustainability is achieved by conserving and properly managing natural resources, particularly those that are non-renewable and/or essential for life support, by reducing pollution, maintaining biological variety, and protecting natural heritage.

In September 2015, United Nations published the United Nations 2030 Agenda, established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 2). The Agenda 2030 seeks to deliver prosperity and peace to the people and the earth. At the same time, the Agenda hopes to balance economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The Goals and targets stimulate action in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet includes people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. The Sustainable Development Goals are a global call to action to alleviate poverty, safeguard the environment, and enhance people's lives and opportunities worldwide. All UN Member States accepted the 17 Goals in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which outlined a 15-year timeline to accomplish the Goals. (United Nations 2015)



Figure 2. Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2016)

2.2 Events and their impacts

Events are an integral part of our lives, serving as a platform for individuals and organizations to come together and engage in a variety of activities. From concerts, festivals, and sporting events to conferences, seminars, and trade shows, events offer unique opportunities for networking, learning, and entertainment. Events enable us to celebrate and memorialize personal and public

landmark milestones, bring communities together, and give chances for amusement. Governments are eager to host and organize events that will generate attention, create employment, and attract tourists. (Holmes & al. 2015)

In *Event Management: An Introduction*, an event is defined as a “temporary and purposive gathering of people” (Bladen & al. 2022). In *Sustainable Event Management: A Practical Guide* (Jones 2017) event is “a gathering of people for a purpose” and the purpose range wide from promote knowledge, showcase excellence, entertaining, competing to inspire community pride, celebrating culture, or enhancing social cohesion. Similarly, there is a wide range of how events are organized. This variation is frequently based on the sociocultural milieus of host cultures. Variations in the shape and function of events will also be explained by differences in the political, economic, and technical conditions of different countries. Meanwhile, global factors like increased migration, aging populations, terrorist worries, and climate change have resulted in significant convergence in event management approach throughout the world. (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017) Nevertheless, in collecting all those people for whatever way or purposes, resources are utilized, garbage is generated, and people, the environment, and economies are all impacted (Jones 2017).

2.2.1 Economic impacts

One of the most commonly cited positive economic impacts of events is employment generation. Mega-events, in particular, are believed to create numerous jobs through investments in venue construction, urban renewal, and event tourism expenditures (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017; Raj & Musgrave 2009). While economic models and employment multipliers have been used to estimate the number of jobs created, many of these positions are temporary and are often filled by volunteers rather than full-time employees. (Holmes & al. 2015) This problem may assist event organizers by lowering labor costs; nevertheless, it will not generate long-term gains for locals' finances. It is therefore more accurate to claim that events increase the skill and experience levels of the workforce, which can have long-term benefits (Holmes & al. 2015).

The event industry generates direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts. Direct impacts refer to the economic benefits generated by the event itself, such as revenue from ticket sales, sponsorships, and exhibitor fees. Indirect impacts arise from the event-related spending by businesses that supply goods and services to the event, such as catering, security, and transport. Induced impacts result from the spending by employees of event-related businesses, who use their wages to purchase goods and services in the broader economy. Events can attract visitors from other regions and countries, leading to increased spending on accommodation, food, transport, and souvenirs. The construction for a major event can lead to increased investment in the surrounding area, such as the development of hotels, restaurants, and hospitals. (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017; Holmes & al.

2015) Government grants, investment, sponsorship, and tourist spending are all sources of income that can have multi-plier effects, where the initial injection of funds ripples through the local economy, creating additional employment, income, and value through the spending of those who receive it. However, leakage of income from the local economy in the form of expenditure on imports, taxes, payment for services, and prize money for competitors detracts from the income multiplier effects. In some cases, the multiplier effect is less than one, indicating that the local economy is not retaining much of the event income it receives. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Inflation is a negative economic impact related to events. The tourism and retail sectors often take advantage of the high demand for transport, accommodation, and services associated with an event by increasing prices, which results in price inflation. This practice, known as 'gouging,' can be a significant economic burden, particularly for those who cannot afford to visit or remain in the host destination. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Opportunity cost is another negative impact linked with government allocation of public funds to an event. This cost refers to the cost of foregoing alternative uses of those funds, such as building hospitals, schools, or police stations. Critics argue that these alternatives have a much longer-term economic benefit to society than hosting large, one-off events, but measuring opportunity cost can be challenging, and it is often overlooked. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Externalities are negative impacts connected with events, such as increased traffic congestion, littering, and environmental damage. These issues might cost the government or local governments a lot of money to fix and clean up after the event. However, very few studies take into account the time lost and cost involved in these impacts. Moreover, employment in the venue and environmental clean-up is often erroneously counted as a benefit of an event when it should be counted as a cost. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Legacy effects are both positive and negative. If public monies are leveraged correctly, the longer-term benefits can include enhanced branding of the host destination, increased business, trade, and investment from outside of the host destination, increased tourism arrivals and expenditure, increased pride amongst the host community, and perpetual scholarships and funds to support ongoing community and sporting development. However, there are factors that can cause events to create an economic burden on the host destination that can last for generations, including increased public debt due to cost overruns on construction and operation, ongoing maintenance costs, underutilized 'white elephant' venues, and lasting negative destination images associated with problems at the event. (Holmes & al. 2015) According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a white elephant is something that is expensive or takes a lot of money to keep in excellent shape, but that serves no use and is no longer desired. The Oxford Dictionary defines the term as an object that

has no utility and is no longer required, despite the fact that it may have cost a lot of money. 'White elephants' are particularly associated with cities that have hosted some of the most recent Games of the twenty-first century, as evidenced by accounts of Sydney's uncertain legacy two years after the 2000 Games, Athens' struggles to generate viable reuses for its venues, Beijing's largely empty 'Bird's nest stadium, and numerous hoarded or boarded-up venues in Rio, Sochi, and elsewhere. (Davis 2020)

2.2.2 Socio-cultural impacts

Those who reside in the town or city where the event is taking place are affected by all sorts of events. These effects are referred to as 'impacts,' and they might be favourable or negative, short or long-term, small or more severe. Good impacts naturally benefit communities, whilst negative impacts might pose problems for people. Short-term effects often persist only for the length of the event, but long-term effects can continue much longer and can be permanent. (Holmes & al. 2015)

The short-term positive impacts are stated to be intangible. They are not so easy to be seen or measured. For example, a community may appreciate the opportunity to participate in an event and share an experience with friends and relatives. Members of the community may believe that hosting the event makes their town appear good, and they may appreciate the prestige of the event as a result. Festivals and gatherings can also help to build "vibrant communities." (Holmes & al. 2015) Such short-term impacts can lead to tangible long-term impacts. Events may generate a feeling of community, promote social cohesion, and contribute to the development of social networks and connections. Events provide volunteering opportunities, enabling people to get involved in their communities, contribute to society, and develop new skills, including administration, logistics, and risk management training. Events can promote cultural exchange by bringing people from different backgrounds together, facilitating cross-cultural communication and understanding, and celebrating diversity. (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017; Holmes & al. 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009)

On the negative side, the majority of the short-term impacts are tangible – they are easily observable, felt, or recognized. Events can disrupt the daily lives of residents, with issues such as overcrowding, traffic congestion, noise pollution, litter, and attendees' anti-social behaviour. While the event is ongoing, the residents may lose the use of their frequented places such as their favourite restaurants, coffee shops or shopping malls. They also may not be able to access the town hall or local park. (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017; Holmes & al. 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009)

Long-term negative impacts, on the other hand, are intangible. An event can develop a negative community image, creates community alienation where individuals of the community do not want to be associated with the event and do not attend or support it in any respect, or lose the authenticity

of tradition and turn them into commercial commodities. (Holmes & al. 2015) Events that rely on cultural stereotypes can reinforce negative attitudes and beliefs about certain groups of people, exacerbating social inequalities (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017). Furthermore, events that appropriate elements of a culture without proper respect or understanding can offend or harm members of that culture.

2.2.3 Environmental impacts

A planned event will have an immediate influence on its surroundings, but it may also have larger local, regional, or even global environmental implications over varying time periods, depending on the nature of the event and how it is managed. The environmental consequences of human activities are central to the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability. Apart from its role as a life-sustaining system, research has found obvious linkages between environmental quality and human well-being. Events can have positive impacts on the environment if they are carefully planned and managed. This can include tangible outcomes like better environmental quality and intangible outcomes such as increased public awareness and changes in attitudes and behaviours. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Some examples of **positive impacts** include urban renewal, nature conservation and rehabilitation, and demonstration effects.

Urban renewal involves improving the built environment, such as restoring old buildings and enhancing infrastructure. Mega-events like the Olympic Games have been used as a catalyst for broad-scale redevelopment, which can have both positive and negative social and economic consequences. (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017; Holmes & al. 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009)

Nature conservation and rehabilitation refers to actions focused on maintaining endemic plant and animal species and restoring ecologically degraded areas. Some events focus on cleaning up litter and weeds in natural areas or replanting native vegetation. Other events like garden festivals promote the creation of natural areas while raising environmental awareness and encouraging responsible behaviour. (Holmes & al. 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009)

Demonstration effects refer to the impact of events on the behaviour and attitudes of attendees and the wider community. Events with a sustainability focus typically incorporate the promotion of sustainable practices into their programs, but the evidence of their effectiveness in changing behaviour is mixed. There is a gap between stated behavioural intentions and actual behaviour, especially over the longer term. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Notwithstanding these advantages, events have significant negative environmental impacts. Events generate a lot of garbage, require a lot of energy, and even pollute the environment. (Bui, Nguyen, Nguyen, Tran & Ngo 2020) Negative impacts can be caused by the activities related to the event or the behaviour of the event's audience. The common negative impacts of an event that researchers have noted are air and water pollution, litter and waste, vegetation trampling, and congestion and crowding. The biggest impact of an event can be generated by participant and spectator travel. The negative environmental impacts can potentially negatively affect the audience's experience and satisfaction with the event. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Air pollution can affect air quality and climate and human health in the short and long term. The burning of fuel for transportation and electricity generation is a major source of air pollution during events. This can occur both on-site and during the transit of personnel, equipment, and supplies from other locations. Generators or mains power may also be used at events, both of which increase emissions. The usage of pyrotechnics can also have a transient and local influence on air quality. Camping and campfire events may also result in worse local air quality owing to particles from burning fuel and items. Nitrogen oxides (NO_x), carbon monoxide and dioxide (CO and CO₂), sulphur oxides (SO_x), methane (CH₄), and airborne smoke particles can all be emitted because of energy use (particulates). The first four gases on the list are greenhouse gases (GHGs), and their accumulation in the Earth's atmosphere contributes to climate change. Because of their chemical composition and capacity to trap heat in the atmosphere, some GHGs, such as methane, have a bigger impact on climate change than others. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Water pollution can result from spills at the event or wastewater entering waterways. Water pollution may occur when wastewater and runoff from event sites infiltrate water bodies such as lakes, seas, and groundwater, which can harm aquatic ecosystems and human health. Spills of oil, gasoline, solvents, and other pollutants at the event site can contaminate nearby bodies of water and potentially harm ecosystems. Wastewater and sewage created by event attendees may also enter mainstream treatment procedures and be released into rivers, resulting in worse water quality and significant human health consequences. For example, limited infrastructure to cope with water supply and waste disposal in outdoor or green field sites might raise the danger of water contamination. People who attend outdoor events may also contribute to water pollution by peeing in public places, which can result in excess nutrients entering groundwater and streams and causing eutrophication. Eutrophication happens when excessive nitrogen levels in water encourage the growth of algae and certain forms of bacteria, which can restrict light and oxygen levels in the water and kill aquatic plants and animals. This can also lead to the formation of poisons, which can be harmful to humans who drink the water. (Holmes & al. 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009)

Litter and waste are common issues at many events, particularly those held outside with vendors selling disposable things. It has a detrimental impact on public perception of environmental quality, particularly in natural environments. Trash may have an ecological impact on streams and animals, as well as long-term difficulties like overflowing landfills. Utilizing biodegradable and recyclable containers and providing participants incentives to collect litter can help lessen the effect. (Holmes & al. 2015)

When events are held outdoors, the presence of large numbers of people and vehicles can lead to **vegetation trampling**, resulting in the loss of vegetation, soil compaction, and erosion. This is particularly concerning in natural or sensitive areas such as riverbanks or coastal dune areas easily damaged by trampling. (Holmes & al. 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009) Research shows that trampling impacts occur rapidly at first and then accumulate more slowly over time. (Holmes & al. 2015)

To attract an audience, organized events frequently result in vast numbers of people and vehicles converging on a venue or surrounding region, causing **congestion** on transportation networks and at the venue. Congestion occurs when the physical capacity of a venue is surpassed by the number of people or vehicles attempting to enter it, resulting in obstructed flows. To reduce congestion, choose a site or location that has enough capacity for the estimated audience and manage transportation, crowds, and attendee flows. (Holmes & al. 2015)

While big crowds can occasionally contribute to unpleasant judgments of **crowding**, such as when traffic jams impede movement, this is not always the case. For example, the yearly gathering of a huge number of people in the small rural town of Parkes, Australia, for an Elvis music festival was welcomed by the majority of inhabitants and attendees. Factors such as event environment, activity, demography, personal tolerance, and goals may all impact crowding. To determine crowding, it is vital to understand the perspectives of individuals attending the event or affected by it. (Holmes & al. 2015)

2.3 Sustainable event management

According to Ferdinand and Kitchin (2017), the primary goal of event management is to provide a one-of-a-kind experience for a specific audience while working within limited resources. Ferdinand and Kitchin (2017) also defined sustainable events as events that have a beneficial effect on people, the environment and financial success as well as meeting the economic, sociocultural, and environmental demands of the stakeholders involved, including the hosting community. Regardless of the type or size of an event, whether it is a meeting for 100 people in a hotel, a conference for 500, an exhibition for 10,000, a sporting match in an arena for 50,000, a street parade, a rock music festival, an arts festival, food fair, religious celebration, or formal ball, it is possible to approach event

planning with sustainability in mind. If all event organizers prioritize sustainability as a fundamental aspect of their planning, the collective positive impact of their actions could be substantial. (Jones 2014)

ISO 20121 defines sustainable event management as the practice of incorporating environmental and social responsibility considerations into the planning of events. This involves taking into account the needs and values of various stakeholders who may be affected. Sustainable event management requires taking measures to minimize harmful impacts, as well as seeking out opportunities to create positive legacies that benefit communities, such as through philanthropic or volunteer initiatives. (McKinley 2018)

In recent years, several guides, standards, and certification programs have been designed to assist event managers and planners in creating sustainable events. These often cover all three of the implications on the environment, the economy, and society. While some guides have a particular area of expertise, others are created to apply to any size and style of event. A few guides are industry-driven, and others are created by non-profit organizations under the direction of the government. For instance, ISO20121 is a set of international standards that describe the specifications for a high-quality event sustainability management system for any kind of event. It was issued in 2012. For the 2012 Olympic Games in London, ISO20121 had its first formal application. (Holmes & al. 2015)

When considering sustainability management for an event, Jones (2014) suggests dividing it into three categories: issues, impacts, and outcomes.

Issues are particular acts that may need to be managed, such as contact with local inhabitants, recycling, and the use of energy-efficient equipment.

Impacts are the measurable outcomes of such issues; negative if not managed correctly, and positive if successfully managed: for example, unfavourable and disruptive public opinion; waste to be handled and increased trash to landfill; and more greenhouse gas created than necessary.

Outcomes are the end results of the issues being managed and the consequences that are being decreased or enhanced: for example, the event improves community cohesiveness; resources are preserved; and the effects of climate change are lessened.

Outlining the sustainability issues and the corresponding management plan is essential. Although an event planner could be eager to use sustainable management techniques, not all stakeholders may support their efforts (Holmes & al. 2015). And “You are not expected to deal with everything all at once”, Jones (2014) said. A core element of sustainability management is continuous

improvement, and this assumption involves a tiered approach to controlling effects. And even when all the issues and impacts cannot be handled instantly, it is crucial to inform the stakeholders who may be impacted or hold a viewpoint on the situation. (Jones 2014)

Holmes & al. (2015) divided stakeholders into primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are the individuals and organizations without whose support the event could not occur. Secondary stakeholders are groups or persons who are not directly participating in the event but can nevertheless have a substantial impact on its success or may be affected by the event. (Holmes & al. 2015) Only with the active engagement of everyone involved can a successful transition to sustainable event production be achieved. (Jones 2014)

Holmes & al. (2015) listed down some of the key stakeholders that can commonly be identified in an event:

- The event organization
- The venue or host location
- The client (if the event is being organized by a contractor)
- The performers or participants
- The event audience/attendees
- Organization management, staff, and volunteers
- The host community
- Local businesses suppliers and contractors
- Local, regional, and/or national governments
- Sponsors, partners, and contributors
- Media and public relations organizations
- Other interested groups, such as cultural, ethnic, and environmental groups

In an ideal world, all parties involved in an event would have the same goals and aspirations, ensuring that the event's success would benefit all parties involved, both primary and secondary. The event will have a far higher chance of moving towards sustainability in the future if sustainability is a value that guides stakeholders' goals and objectives and is a key aspect of event planning. (Holmes & al. 2015)

Engaging stakeholders in the process of identifying sustainability issues is an opportunity to collaborate on finding solutions and encourage their involvement and commitment to the event's sustainability journey. By working together, stakeholders can play an active role in addressing sustainability challenges and promoting sustainable practices for the event. (Jones 2014)

When identifying sustainability issues, events typically prioritize their key operational areas first.

These may include:

- Destination, site and/or venue
- Procurement/supply chain
- Waste
- Energy
- Transport
- Water and sanitation
- Event workforce conditions
- Engagement and communications.

3 Sustainable event practices in Helsinki, Finland

Finland is well-positioned to start putting the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into practice because of its long history of fostering sustainable development via dialogue and wide-spread participation. Through institutional frameworks and by encouraging various societal actors to take independent action in favour of sustainable development, Finland has established a system of ownership to promote sustainable development. The long-term, integrated approach to sustainable development that has been taken in early childhood education, schools, academic institutions, and universities, as well as the work done by NGOs and businesses, has supported this work. In Finland, sustainable development has historically been a shared goal. (Prime Minister's Office 2017)

The Finnish government has committed to promoting sustainable development on a national and international level, including through education and research. The Ministry of Education established a working group, the Committee for Education for Sustainable Development, to coordinate and implement the Baltic 21E program, which aims to incorporate sustainable development into education systems in Baltic states. (Ministry of Education 2006)

In Helsinki, a number of organizations have taken on the challenge of implementing sustainable event management practices. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, for example, has made a commitment to sustainability by integrating sustainable practices into its event management curriculum. Meanwhile, Tapaus, an event management company in Helsinki, has incorporated sustainable practices into its operations. The Helsinki Exhibition and Convention Centre (Messukeskus) has implemented a sustainable development program to reduce its carbon footprint and promote sustainability.

Big events and festivals in Helsinki have also embraced sustainable event management practices. Slush, one of the world's leading startup events, has made sustainability a key part of its mission and has implemented various sustainable practices, such as reducing waste and promoting sustainable transportation. Similarly, Flow Festival, one of Helsinki's largest music festivals, has made a commitment to sustainability and has implemented initiatives such as composting and using renewable energy sources.

This chapter will explore some examples from organizers, venues and leading events that have strived for sustainable event management practices in Helsinki.

3.1 Helsinki

Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, has taken significant steps toward promoting sustainable event management in recent years. Helsinki has established a goal of reducing emissions by 60% by 2030 and becoming carbon neutral by 2035. Despite a 150,000 increase in population, Helsinki's emissions were 33% lower in 2020 than they were in 1990. The emissions per household were calculated to be around 49% lower. However, in order to achieve carbon neutrality in Helsinki, emissions must be lowered much more and quicker than before. Residents, the City, companies, and organizations are working together to establish a carbon-neutral Helsinki. (Helsinki s.a.)

One of the primary measures taken by the city is the publication of comprehensive Sustainable Meeting Guidelines (Helsinki 2020a). This guideline provides event organizers with information and guidelines on how to organize sustainable events, covering topics such as waste management, energy consumption, transportation, and communication, among others.

Helsinki also provides The Think Sustainably service. The service assists people in choosing more sustainable ways to live and enjoy Helsinki. It curates material from the MyHelsinki.fi website to recommend sustainable services such as restaurants, shopping, attractions, events, and lodging. The service is based on tailored criteria for the city of Helsinki established in collaboration with the independent think tank Demos Helsinki, local interest groups, and sustainability specialists. By meeting the basic standards in their relevant service category, an operator is welcomed to the Think Sustainably service and will be identified with a green tab on the MyHelsinki.fi website. Some requirements are easier to meet than others, while others necessitate more sustained, long-term efforts (for example, carbon footprint estimates and compensations). The criteria were developed with the goal of making them accessible to a wide range of operators, from little cafés to huge hotels, because everyone should have the same chance to be a part of a broader story of change. (Helsinki 2020b)

Helsinki has an extensive public transportation system that includes buses, trams, and trains, and the city encourages event organizers to promote sustainable transportation options for attendees, such as biking, walking, or using public transportation. The use of locally sourced food and products at events is strongly promoted to reduce the environmental impact of transportation and support local businesses. A strict waste management system is also implemented that ensures waste generated at events is separated, recycled, and properly disposed of.

3.2 Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences is a higher education institution located in Helsinki, Finland. It was established in 2007 after a merger of three different institutions, and it offers a

range of degree programs in fields such as business, hospitality, tourism, information technology, and sports management. Haaga-Helia has four campuses in the Helsinki metropolitan area and one campus in Porvoo.

Haaga-Helia is a participant in the Central Chamber of Commerce's Climate Commitment program, in which it has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 at the latest. Furthermore, the UAS is a member of the City of Helsinki's Climate Partnership Network, which strives to foster collaboration to decrease climate emissions and increase business competitiveness. The institution's focus on sustainability is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement, which aim to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The action plan developed by Haaga-Helia is comprehensive and includes a range of measures that address the main sources of carbon emissions. One of the key objectives of the plan is to reduce energy consumption and promote the use of renewable energy sources. The institution has set a goal to reduce its transportation emissions by promoting sustainable modes of transport, such as cycling, walking, and public transportation. Haaga-Helia encourages its staff and students to use these modes of transportation and provides incentives such as bike parking. (Haaga-Helia 2020).

The institution's sustainability plan also focuses on waste management, with measures that promote circular economy practices. For instance, the institution has reduced the number of single-use plastics used on campus by replacing them with reusable alternatives. The school also introduced more plant-based meal options and encouraged the use of reusable tableware. Overall, Haaga-Helia has successfully achieved its emissions reduction target ahead of schedule by reducing emissions by more than a third overall. This is primarily due to changes in working methods, travel, and study following the corona pandemic. (Haaga-Helia 2021)

Together with Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and Laurea University of Applied Sciences, they founded a strategic collaboration called 3UAS (or 3AMK in Finnish). In May of 2022, 3UAS launched the Green Exchange Ambassador Program. As Green Exchange Ambassadors, students can share sustainable actions and examples that they have been experiencing during their exchange study through social media postings, TikTok videos, blog/vlog/testimonial articles, and participation in events such as the 3UAS Erasmus Days. They created a guide called "Guide to a Greener Exchange" as part of their efforts to promote sustainable exchanges study and travel (3AMK 2022). This guide offers tips and suggestions for students who are interested in reducing their environmental impact while on exchange. The guide also encourages students to learn about the local culture and environment and to get involved in community initiatives and events that promote sustainability.

Haaga-Helia is a partner in event planning with high reputation. Haaga-Helia ensures that all of its events are exceptional and unforgettable occasions, executed by talented event management students who work closely with experienced lecturers. Haaga-Helia event management students prioritize sustainable practices in their projects, as demonstrated in events like Stenden Exchange 2022.

In Stenden Exchange 2022, a variety of activities was arranged with the goal for Stenden students from the Netherlands to know how Porvoo campus can achieve faster carbon neutrality by organizing CO₂ workshop. It covered topics such as a comparison of CO₂ reduction efforts between the two universities, individual carbon footprints, and ways to reduce them. The workshop also included activities and communication focusing on protecting nature and raising awareness of the dangers of elevated CO₂ emissions. The ultimate goal was to encourage students to make more environmentally friendly choices. (TEMPO21 2022)

Haaga Helia also supports academic research and thesis work centring around sustainable event practices for the institution's own activities. For instance, "Guideline: Sustainable Event Management in Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus" was commissioned recently in 2020, targeting Tourism and Event Management students to follow and practice sustainable event management culture in Porvoo campus. Another example is "How to organise sustainable student events: Guidebook" that was developed in 2021 for Helga, Student Union of Haaga-Helia, with the aim to provide a practical guidebook instructing student unions, their action groups, and student associations.

3.3 Messukeskus

Messukeskus Helsinki, Expo and Convention Centre is a Finnish company which has been in operation for over 100 years and has grown to become "the largest event centre in Finland, hosting Finland's most inspiring events and exciting encounters" (Messukeskus 2023). The venue consists of several halls and conference rooms that can accommodate events of various sizes, from small meetings to large-scale international exhibitions. Besides its core business, Messukeskus is committed to reducing its environmental impact and promoting sustainable practices throughout its operations and aligns its sustainability efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Messukeskus employs cutting-edge building service technologies, including solar electricity, geothermal heating, district cooling, heat recovery, and LED lighting (Messukeskus SDG s.a.). They have been cutting down water use by 50%, heating consumption by 20%, and energy consumption by 15% during the last 10 years. In 2017, the Energy Authority and Motiva recognized Messukeskus as an energy-efficient event facility (Messukeskus s.a.).

In the summer of 2019, 1,589 solar panels were put on the rooftops of the Messukeskus complex. They generate 445 MWh of electricity each year. This is equivalent to the energy required to create 2.3 million cups of coffee. The solar power plant was built in collaboration with Helen Ltd, and it will strengthen their reliance on renewable energy. At the same time, the requirement for cooling will be reduced since the solar panels on the roof prevent heat from entering the structure. (Messukeskus s.a.) During the pandemic year, energy usage was kept to a bare minimum to achieve significant reductions in energy consumption (Messukeskus SDG s.a.).

To reduce food waste, Messukeskus works with Fazer Food Services, the firm in charge of their restaurant and catering services. In their conference catering, Messukeskus prefer organic and local foods with 85% of the ingredients are from Finland. Their cafés sell coffee that has been sustainably roasted using green energy and their coffee decreases the environmental impact by producing no coffee waste. (Messukeskus s.a.)

The same with other organizations and events, Messukeskus urge their visitors to fill their own water bottles with their tap water. Wastewater is treated in an environmentally responsible manner. Chemical usage is restricted due to environmental concerns and stringent regulations. Messukeskus has cut its water use in half over the last decade by using water-saving bubble nozzles. (Messukeskus SDG s.a.)

Recycling bins are available at all their facilities. Paper, cardboard, biowaste, lumber, glass, plastic, metal, and carpets are collected at collection stations in the showrooms. During assembly and disassembly, their customers will be assisted by an environmental supervisor. Their office is free of plastic. (Messukeskus s.a.) The company also encourages sustainable transportation options, such as cycling and public transportation, for its staff and visitors. (Messukeskus SDG s.a.)

Messukeskus also care about social sustainability when they strive to be an accessible venue for all visitors. All their entrances are accessible, and the entire building is accessible via elevator. Toilet facilities are available on all floors. Parking is free for persons with a disability parking permit, and personal assistants of disabled people are admitted free to Messukeskus events. (Messukeskus s.a.)

3.4 Slush

Slush is an annual startup and technology event hosted in Helsinki, Finland. Slush promotes meetings between company founders and investors such as venture capitalists through events such as matchmaking and pitching competitions. Slush aspires to create a global entrepreneurial community. In 2022, Slush drew 12,000 of the brightest innovators, investors, operators, executives, media, and talent (Slush 2022a). As the event has grown in popularity and size, the organizers have

dedicated themselves to taking serious actions to reduce the environmental effect of organizing a large-scale international event like Slush (Slush 2022b). According to Anna Pakkala, head of sustainability, at Slush they take sustainability into account in all decisions related to event production, programming, and operations (Ruohonen & Bird 2018).

Together with Sitra, Slush organized workshops and programs with the theme of sustainability. For example, the Slush evening: The future of circular food where they talked about responsible food sources; Slush Youth ponders the future of consumption where attendees can update their knowledge of the global economy and adapt to the constraints imposed by limiting resources and Earth's carrying capacity; or the Slush Global Impact Accelerator – a program for developing-country start-ups that address difficulties connected to the goals of sustainable development. (Vahti 2017)

The carbon footprint of Slush covers all the emissions related to the main event (like energy, production, transport, waste management, food) and also includes the emissions generated by the organization of the event throughout the year, as well as those caused by attendees' travel and accommodation during Slush. 86% of the total carbon footprint is due to attendees flying from various parts of the world to Helsinki. Slush took the responsibility and wanted to align with its objective of reducing the harm and increasing the positive impact of the event by offsetting the entire carbon footprint of the event, even taking accountability for the increased air travel caused by the event. (Compensate 2022) In collaboration with Compensate, Slush assessed the total carbon footprint of the 2022 event and compensate for the emissions created. Compensate Operations Ltd. founded in 2018, is a Finnish-based company that provides a carbon offsetting service to individuals and businesses. Their goal is to make it easy for people to offset their carbon emissions by supporting renewable energy and forest conservation projects around the world. The company works by calculating the carbon footprint of their customers based on their activities, such as travel, energy consumption, and other lifestyle choices. The customer can then purchase carbon credits from Compensate, which are used to fund various projects that reduce carbon emissions. (Compensate 2021)

The estimates included emissions from the event itself, as well as their guests' flights, lodgings, and meals while in Helsinki. Furthermore, Slush's year-round activities were factored into the calculations. They took proactive steps to reduce their carbon footprint. These measures include serving only vegetarian food at the event, creating a carbon budget for their team's travel, and exploring new ways to have a positive impact beyond the event. Alongside their efforts to reduce emissions, they will also offset their carbon footprint through carbon capture projects selected by Compensate, making them carbon negative. To help achieve their goal, attendees can have their flights

to Helsinki compensated by Slush. Slush also recommended their attendees to offset their own flights to increase the amount of carbon captured by the Slush community and fill out a brief questionnaire to assess their carbon footprint and take responsibility for their emissions. (Slush 2022)

Pure Waste is a Finnish sustainable fashion brand that produces clothing made entirely from recycled textile waste, committed to sustainability and transparency throughout their supply chain, from the sourcing of raw materials to the production of their garments, with the aim of reducing the amount of textile waste that ends up in landfills and oceans. (PureWaste s.a.) Slush designed and ordered clothes with Pure Waste, using 100% recycled textile waste materials (Compensate 2022). Their report showed that in Slush 2021, the total Footprint emissions of the Slush 2021 Collection were 3 217 000 liters of water used and 2 869 kg of CO₂ emissions generated. The total Handprint of the Slush 2021 collection was 3 760 986 liters of water saved, which is equal to the basic daily water requirements of 50 146 people, and 2 808 kg of CO₂ emissions reduced, which equals the average CO₂ emissions of driving an average passenger car in Finland for 20 157 kilometers. (Slush 2022)

All the decorative materials and effects used at Slush events are reused and repurposed, ensuring that each year has a unique look without harming the environment. They have partnered with L&T to create an afterlife plan that reduces waste production. Whenever possible, they use compostable materials for the event. To be environmentally responsible, Slush is a paperless event, and no printed media can be attached anywhere other than the booth owned by their partners. They prohibit the sharing of stickers, balloons, flyers, and other printed media, and rollups are not allowed. To avoid unnecessary waste, they discourage the distribution of physical products or giveaways at the booth, and if any products are given away, they must be made of eco-friendly materials. They collaborated with FloweRescue to redistribute all Slush greenery after the event. (Slush 2022)

FloweRescue was founded in 2016 with the aim of reducing waste and promoting sustainable fashion. The organization is a non-profit organization based in Spain that works to prevent food waste by rescuing unsold and unused flowers from markets and then repurposing them by using a natural dyeing process to create a range of colours for clothing and textile products. FloweRescue also offers workshops and educational programs to promote sustainable fashion practices and raise awareness about food waste. (FloweRescue s.a.) In 2021, with the help of Sun Effects and FloweRescue, Slush distributed approximately 1,000 plants to 14 different nursing homes in Helsinki. (Slush 2022)

At Slush 2022, food vendors were required to include vegetarian options (Thoreau 2019). The menus had been created in collaboration with Linnea Vihonen, a Chef and Food Designer, and were designed not only to be sustainable and delicious but also to be a part of the unforgettable

Slush experience. (Slush 2022) In addition to that, Rebl Eats provided plant-based food options in the Meeting Area to keep attendees fuelled while they network.

Recycling is another task that was taken seriously in Slush. For Slush 2022, all disposables such as plates, cups, and utensils were made biodegradable through collaborations with companies such as Stora Enso (Compensate 2022). In addition, Slush has partnered with L&T to create a waste management plan with the goal of achieving a 100% recycling rate by maximizing raw material collection at the event (Figure 3). The waste categories used at the event include bio waste, energy waste, aluminium cans, mixed waste, and plastic waste. Slush's partners must establish waste management strategies for their booths (Thoreau 2019).

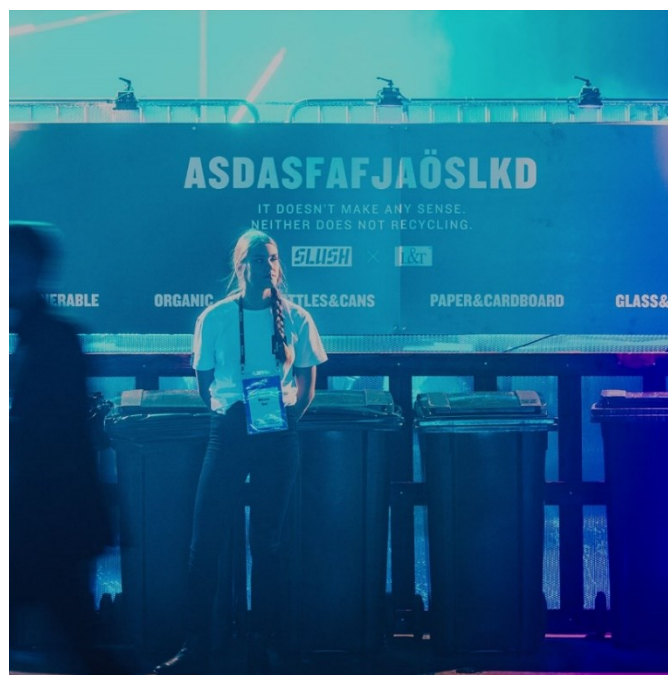


Figure 3. Waste collection point at Slush. (Slush 2022)

Slush solely provided tap water and recommended their attendees bring their own reusable water bottle to Slush and utilize their water station to refill whenever they need (Compensate 2022; Thoreau 2019). Those water stations were provided by Waterlogic. The new cloakroom tags, created in collaboration with Woodyly and VTT, were made from eco-friendly and carbon neutral Woodyly material, which can be recycled (Woodyly 2022). Slush encouraged the use of public transportation as it was convenient and environmentally friendly and offered free tickets to volunteers (Compensate 2022; Thoreau 2019). During the event, electric cars could be charged with Fortum's renewable electricity. (Koskela 2022)

Another way in which Slush promotes sustainability is through its choice of venue. The event is held in Messukeskus Helsinki, which is a leading green convention centre in Europe. The venue is

de-signed to be energy-efficient and environmentally friendly, with features such as a green roof, rainwater harvesting, and energy-efficient lighting and heating systems. (Messukeskus s.a.)

3.5 Flow Festival

The annual Flow Festival has evolved from a small club event since 2004 to a ground-breaking European music and arts festival nowadays. Flow's ambition now is to be a worldwide festival leader and one of the most appealing and distinguished festivals in the world. The objective of Flow is to provide high-quality and diverse experiences while also renewing and developing Helsinki's cultural offering and cultural climate. (Flow Festival 2021)

Environmental Responsibility

The same to Slush, sustainability is taken into account in the festival's energy generation, catering, and transportation. It reuses and recycles resources and urges attendees to do the same. "Flow Festival is a carbon-neutral festival," explains Suvi Kallio, managing director of Flow Festival. "We compensate for the emissions by donating to renewable energy initiatives." (Ruuhonen & Bird 2018)

To analyse the total impact on the environment of the event and to create new tools for more sustainable festival production, the festival launched a new research project with D-mat in 2021. D-mat is an expert company for a more sustainable future. The project is supported by Finland's sustainable growth program and sponsored by the European Union's NextGenerationEU financing. The carbon footprint of Flow Festival 2022 was calculated in detail, including the direct emissions from the production's service chains, such as the transportation of festival guests and performers. The whole festival's material footprint was also assessed to quantify the festival's usage of natural resources and comprehend its overall ecological consequences. Based on the findings of the research, Flow Festival is developing innovative methods to reduce its environmental effect and usage of natural resources. (Flow Festival 2023)

To reduce its environmental debt, Flow Festival has donated to the Finnish Natural Heritage Foundation based on the calculations made at Flow Festival 2022. The donation has resulted in the permanent protection of four hectares of Finnish forest, and the festival will continue to reduce its environmental debt through the foundation in the coming years. (Flow Festival 2023)

In collaboration with Reaktor, they created smart return kiosks (Figure 4) to enable festival attendees to deposit €1 for each drink container they consumed. The deposits collected from the kiosks were donated to The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation for reforestation initiatives.

For every container that was returned, one tree was planted, which could potentially eliminate one ton of car-bon dioxide emissions over the tree's lifetime. (Reaktor s.a.)



Figure 4. Deposit return. (Reaktor s.a.)

Flow Festival is also committed to sustainable food and drink options. In 2022, the festival dropped red meat and poultry entirely from the food selection and ensured that each restaurant had at least one vegan option. 10% of all restaurants served only vegan meals. The festival's caterers were provided with Sustainable Meal guidelines and an evaluation form focusing on the origin and ethical standards of the ingredients used, energy efficiency of food production, logistics, packaging materials, as well as the use of local, organic, and seasonal products. (Queer in The World 2019; Ruuhonen & Bird 2018) Additionally, Flow Festival's visitors can fill up their water bottles at the festival's water supply points, reducing plastic waste and carbon footprint. (Flow Festival 2023)

The festival increased the recycling of biodegradable trash and lowered the quantity of mixed garbage incinerated by power plants to generate electricity (Ruuhonen & Bird 2018). The festival seeks sustainable and durable solutions for the different stages of event production, including selecting furniture, fittings, and decorations that use recyclable, reusable, and long-lasting materials. Flow Festival also uses renewable diesel to cover its energy production needs. (Flow Festival 2023)

Flow Festival encourages smart transportation by being located close to Helsinki city centre and easily accessible by bike, foot, or public transport. The festival also has a free bicycle parking area near the festival site (Kirstein 2022) and HSL organizes additional public transport services during the festival weekend. (Flow Festival 2023)

Flow Festival has been using the EcoCompass environmental management system since 2012 and cooperates with the John Nurminen Foundation to improve the condition of the Baltic Sea with concrete measures that reduce the sea's load and ecological risks. Visitors can support the foundation with a donation of their choice while purchasing a festival ticket. (Flow Festival 2023)

Social Responsibility

Flow Festival places a strong emphasis on social responsibility, recognizing its role in promoting justice, equity, and equality. The festival aims to create an inclusive environment where everyone is welcomed, and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. To ensure that these values are upheld, all staff, associates, and distributors are expected to adhere to the same principles. As part of its commitment to equality, Flow Festival carried out a visitor survey in 2022, with over 9,000 festivalgoers participating. The results showed that 93% of respondents felt that the festival executed equality well. However, Flow Festival acknowledges that there is always room for improvement and welcomes any suggestions for enhancing its efforts in this area. Transparency is another core value at Flow, with the festival striving to communicate clearly and truthfully about its business activities and internal and external communication. Diversity is also a priority, with the programming team considering the gender, nationality, ethnicity, and age of performers to ensure a diverse range of genres in music, art, and food. In addition, Flow Festival is involved in various initiatives, such as the European Keychange project, to improve gender equality in the music industry. Flow also works with non-profit organizations to support refugees and immigrants with employment and entrepreneurship, as well as offering educational opportunities for young people interested in the events industry. As a large public event, safety and accessibility are also key concerns for Flow Festival, with measures in place to ensure that the festival area is designed to be as accessible as possible and that the festivalgoers can attend safely. The festival continuously develops and improves its safety and accessibility policies, striving to create a welcoming and safe environment for all. (Flow Festival 2023)

Economic Responsibility

The Flow Festival places a strong emphasis on financial sustainability and profitability. To achieve this, they employ a full-time team and hundreds of seasonal workers, as well as adhering to legal employer obligations and industry salary recommendations. They also prioritize responsibility in procurement and services, favouring local operators wherever possible. The festival works closely with the City of Helsinki to attract tourists and professionals, and to contribute to the city's economic success. A 2015 report estimated that the festival generated around 20 million euros in monetary traffic, as well as creating a network of competence that generated new business in other parts of Helsinki. (Flow Festival 2023)

4 Current situation of sustainability in Vietnam

Out of all the ASEAN nations, Vietnam has shown significant economic growth. The trend of urbanization and administrative boundary extension has been ongoing, with the urban population quickly expanding and rural populations' living conditions also rising. However, unsustainable socioeconomic growth leads to a significant impact on Vietnam's environment and natural resources. (Nguyen & al. 2022) The economic expansion has resulted in major environmental concerns, and the clash between the environment and development has become increasingly apparent. (Tien & al. 2019) It has put unprecedented pressure on the natural environment, owing to increased demand for natural resources and negative pressures associated with, for example, waste management, both of which are harmful to both the environment and the Vietnamese socioeconomic system. (Nguyen & al. 2022)

Researchers and politicians in Vietnam have devoted close attention to the issue of sustainable development. The topic of sustainable development is frequently viewed from two perspectives: To begin, sustainable development is development in the context of preserving habitat values, with the ecological environment as one of the aspects that comprise the greatest values of development. Second, sustainable development is long-term development for today and tomorrow; today's development has no impact on tomorrow. The notion of sustainable development emerges progressively from social realities and is important. (Tien & al. 2019)

The Communist Party of Vietnam has integrated sustainable development into its strategies, such as the Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011 - 2020 and the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2011 - 2015 and 2016 - 2020 and issued policies and plans for the implementation of the SDGs. The government has also established different laws, policies, and strategies for natural resources management and environmental protection, and developed a system of national standards and technical regulations on the environment. Specific databases with information on land, water resources, and sea islands are also under development and management. The government of Vietnam recognizes environmental protection as one of the three main pillars of sustainable development and has determined not to trade off the environment for the benefit of economic growth. (Nguyen & al. 2022)

Power generation

Vietnam's power sector relies heavily on coal-fired power plants, which account for around 39% of the country's total power generation. However, the government is actively seeking to diversify the country's power sources and reduce its reliance on coal. In recent years, there has been significant investment in renewable energy, particularly in solar and wind power. The government has set a

target of increasing the share of renewable energy in the country's total power mix to 15-20% by 2030. The government has also been working to promote energy efficiency and conservation measures, including the adoption of energy-efficient technologies and the implementation of energy management systems. (Alpuerto 2022; International Trade Administration 2022a)

Eco-focused startups

There has been also an increase in investment in the small but growing eco-focused startup community recently. Vietnam's Dat Bike, which aims to convert all gasoline-powered motorbikes in Vietnam and Southeast Asia to electric, raised an additional \$8 million in funding in 2022, while fashion recommerce platform Piktina received fresh capital to reduce fashion waste and carbon emissions. Buyers and sellers may easily connect while clearing out closets using the Piktina platform. Piktina aims to minimize fashion waste and carbon emissions by raising awareness of overconsumption and instilling sustainable ideals in the community. (Alpuerto 2022) Touchstone Partners has invested \$1 million in Piktina, which aims to raise consumer awareness to reduce fashion waste and carbon emissions (Figure 5) (Alpuerto 2022; Dhond 2022).



Figure 5. Touchstone Partners has invested \$1 million in Piktina. (Alpuerto 2022)

Earth Venture, a venture capital fund that focuses purely on tech startups that bring digital solutions to climate challenges, established its presence in Vietnam in March 2022. Tien Nguyen, the general partner at Earth Venture, believes that although Vietnam's eco-focused startup community is limited, sustainability will become a prominent startup trend in the coming years because “The

ultimate goal of investment is to bring prosperity, but there is no prosperity on a dead planet". (Alpuerto 2022)

Transportation

Vietnam is a motorcycle-loving country. With over 65 million registered motorcycles, traffic congestion and poor air quality are everyday occurrences in Vietnam. While the sea of motorcycles has added a distinct charm to the country, their pervasive presence is a significant environmental hazard (Figure 6). Aside from two-wheeled vehicles, major highways are clogged with millions of cars and trucks, the majority of which are powered by diesel engines. (Alpuerto 2022)



Figure 6. A traffic jam on Nguyen Huu Canh Street in Ho Chi Minh City at rush hour. (Dinh s.a)

The government aims to address this environmental hazard by gradually decreasing and ultimately ceasing the production, assembly, and import of fossil fuel-powered vehicles by 2040. The Ministry of Transport has developed a strategic framework for transport decarbonization and electric mobility, which includes pilot testing electric and green energy trains, using sustainable aviation fuel, and promoting the use of electric vehicles. Vietnam also plans to establish more charging stations and green transport infrastructure to support the transition to electric-powered road vehicles. Although over 65 million motorbikes are registered in Vietnam, the country has already seen an increase in the use of electric motorbikes, with around 1.3 million of them currently in operation, and this

number is expected to rise further as more concrete policies and tax incentives are implemented. (Alpuerto 2022)

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) development

ICT is increasingly becoming a crucial factor in promoting and strengthening environmental protection processes by serving as a tool for collecting, storing, processing, and disseminating environmental information. It facilitates the gathering of reliable data on critical environmental issues such as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity degradation. Information networks enable the sharing and exchange of information and data among various organizations and individuals. (United Nations Development Programme 2003)

The Vietnamese government recognizes the significance of ICT as a major industry and driver of socio-economic growth. According to recent industry research, Vietnam's ICT market was valued at USD 7.7 billion in 2021 and is predicted to rise at an annual rate of around 8% from 2022 to 2026 as both the public and commercial sectors boost their use of ICT solutions. Key industry players such as aviation, banking, energy, healthcare, broadcasting, telecommunications, and urban infrastructure management, are increasingly embracing advanced ICT solutions to optimize their operations and facilitate sustainable growth. Three main operators, Viettel, Vinaphone, and Mobifone, have focused on offering digital infrastructure and services such as digital services, fibre optic infrastructure, digital payment, and cloud services. (International Trade Administration 2022b)

Limitations

However, despite the government's effort towards sustainable development, many of the issues remain unsolved. Inclusive development in Vietnam is still being evaluated unsustainable, particularly when there is no link between economic growth successes and social, cultural, and environmental development. (Tien & al. 2019)

Nguyen & al. (2022) discussed in the study Environmental Sustainability in Vietnam - Piloting the Environmental Sustainability Gap Framework (ESGAP) and Strong Environmental Sustainability Index (SESI) the implementation and results of a pilot project that aimed to evaluate the environmental sustainability of Vietnam. The project utilized two frameworks, ESGAP and SESI, to assess the current state of the country's environmental sustainability and identify areas that need improvement. ESGAP measures the gap between the current state of environmental sustainability and a desired future state, while SESI provides a comprehensive index of environmental sustainability based on indicators related to natural resources, pollution, and climate change. The results of the study showed that Vietnam faces significant environmental sustainability challenges, particularly in the areas of air quality, water quality, and biodiversity conservation. The study also found that there

is a significant gap between the current state of environmental sustainability in Vietnam and the desired future state.

Despite efforts to improve the working environment in Vietnam, many production areas still fail to meet hygiene and safety standards, leading to increased rates of occupational diseases such as those related to dust, toxic chemicals, noise, and temperature. There are still many instances of people's unhealthy lifestyles and bad habits polluting the environment, which in turn affects public health. Examples of this include dumping garbage and waste, leaving animal carcasses in public places and water sources. Unfortunately, even in popular areas, these issues have not been fully addressed. Additionally, many factories, companies, and commercial institutions do not prioritize environmental protection. Instead, they prioritize profits over responsible practices. There is a lack of understanding and promotion of green growth and a green economy as a means of achieving sustainable development, particularly among committees and authorities. (Tien & al. 2019)

Although Vietnam has established a legal system for environmental protection, there are still many shortcomings, such as general and new regulations, a lack of environmental protection mechanisms for land, water, air, and waste recycling, and no legal basis for environmental planning. There is also no framework for resolving disputes or conflicts regarding environmental issues, and while there are provisions on environmental crimes in the Penal Code, they are not comprehensive or specific enough to be effectively implemented. Environmental protection mechanisms and policies have been slow to innovate and are not synchronized with market institutions. While environmental taxes and fees have begun to generate revenue, they have not yet been effective in limiting environmental pollution and promoting sustainable development. (Tien & al. 2019)

The state management system for environmental protection in Vietnam is fragmented and overlapping, with insufficient capacity to address inter and multidisciplinary issues related to environmental protection. The country's capacity to implement international commitments and treaties related to the environment is also limited. Environmental pollution in many places exceeds the tolerance levels of ecosystems, affecting socioeconomic life, living conditions, and public health. Many polluted places exist in soil, water, and air, some of which have reached serious levels. (Tien & al. 2019)

Solid waste management remains limited, with most municipal and rural solid waste not being classified at source. Recycling activities are often fragmented and without state management, leading to environmental pollution. (Tien & al. 2019) According to a study by Huynh (2021), Ho Chi Minh City produces between 1.2 to 1.4 million tons of solid waste annually (equivalent to approximately 3,500 tons per day), and this amount increases at an average rate of 20% each year. Those solid waste is primarily treated by landfills. Unfortunately, the current landfills cannot accommodate the entire volume of waste and more than 80% of landfills fail to meet technical and environmental

hygiene requirements (Tien & al. 2019), and the dumping sites where garbage is sorted do not follow any sanitation procedures (Huynh 2021). Hazardous waste is not well managed due to a lack of technology and equipment, leading to ineffectiveness and unsafety. Technical infrastructure for environmental protection is outdated, weak, and asynchronous. Many industrial parks and export processing zones lack centralized wastewater treatment systems, and over 60% of the 1 million m³ of wastewater generated per day by these areas discharges directly into receiving sources without treatment, causing large-scale environmental pollution in many places. (Tien & al. 2019) Even though environmental protection programs for suburban communities are available, they are often ineffective due to inadequate approaches, implementation methods, or content. A survey conducted in local communities reveals that many people lack understanding of environmental problems and protection (Storch & al. 2009). Additionally, they are not fully aware of the relationship between natural resource exploitation, environmental protection, and sustainable community development. The survey also shows that 56% of the people have little or no knowledge of environmental factors, and only 34% of the people show concern for basic environmental factors such as land and water when prompted. (Huynh 2021)

5 Research approach and data collection

5.1 Method

This thesis is researching on the phenomenon: sustainable event management applications to events in Vietnam. To gain a profound knowledge of the phenomenon, qualitative research method is conducted substantially. The reason was that the concept of sustainable event management is still comparatively new in Vietnam and according to the author's initial literature research, no official re-port or academic study with numerical data has been carried out before.

Qualitative research is a type of research approach that is based on collecting and analysing non-numerical data, typically such as observations, interviews, and text. The path of reasoning in induction goes from particular to general, meaning a few specific situations are employed to arrive at generalizations. (Kananen 2011) Qualitative research finds answers to issues by investigating diverse social environments and the people that occupy them (Berg 2001). Qualitative research is done to learn more about how individuals see the world. In the humanities and social sciences, qualitative research is often employed in areas such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, and so on. (Bhandari 2020)

Qualitative research is reliant on social interpretation, which means that the meanings extracted from the data tend to be more intricate, pliant, and ambiguous compared to quantitative data. Hence, it is imperative to have a sensitive analysis and understanding of the data to gain meaningful insight. In qualitative research, words are the primary source of information rather than numbers, which means that it is essential to scrutinize and elucidate the potential multiple and vague meanings of words. Therefore, the quality of qualitative research depends on the interplay between data collection and data analysis to provide clarity and explore the meanings. (Saunders & al. 2012)

In qualitative research, the three prevalent data collection methods are observation, focused interview, and different kinds of documents. Focused interview is the most common method, and it can be an individual interview or a group interview. (Kananen 2011). Saunders et al. (2012) emphasize that it is crucial to ensure that the nature of the interview aligns with the research questions, objectives, study purpose, and research approach. This underscores the importance of selecting an appropriate interview type that is in harmony with the research methodology to ensure the data collected is valid and reliable... Furthermore, interviews may help refine ideas where research questions and objectives have not yet been formulated. A widely used typology for categorizing interviews based on their level of formality and structure includes: (Saunders & al. 2012)

- Structured interviews

- Semi-structured interviews
- Unstructured or in-depth interviews

To gather data for this thesis, the author employed a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods. Secondary research serves as the preparation for primary research. The secondary research involved selecting resources from academic literature, articles, studies and industry reports obtained from reputable sources on the internet. It provided a broader context for sustainable event management practices, highlighting global trends, frameworks, and guidelines that could be applied to events in Vietnam. The primary data collection was conducted via semi-structured interviews with three event professionals who have worked in Vietnam. These professionals were selected for their extensive experiences at various company sizes and event types in Vietnamese event industry. The semi-structured interview form was chosen due to its flexibility. There were a list of themes and some essential questions to cover, but the rest were typically open-ended questions and slightly developed based on the encountered conversational context. This created a basis for interviewees to prepare while giving the author opportunity to explore the research question and discuss further topics differently from one interview to another.

5.2 Interview implementation

The actual interviews were carried out entirely online due to geographic distance and time limitations. Social media channels such as Facebook, Facebook messenger and WhatsApp were first used to contact potential interviewees. The author posted a request on the Vietnamese Backstage Zone group on Facebook to collaborate with Vietnamese event professionals. Backstage Zone is a community designed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and working experiences, as well as providing networking opportunities among event organizers in Vietnam. The whole ecosystem of Backstage Zone consists of a Facebook fan page, Backstage Event and Backstage Zone group, and the website www.backstage.vn which provides the latest news and information of event industry. The founder of Backstage Zone volunteered to be interviewed. The other two interviewees were contacted directly by the author. They were all experts in the field with a lot of experience. It was essential to get a rich pool of experience and perspectives in a limited number of interviews. To ensure transparency and maintain ethical standards, three individuals have provided explicit consent for their names to be used.

After candidate selection, email was used as a formal communication tool and data tracking. The interview questions were sent to the interviewees in advance to ensure that they would be well-prepared and understood the concept of the thesis. The two first interviews were conducted through Google Meets and the third interview was conducted through Messenger audio call. The first interview with Nga Phan was conducted on Friday 21 April 2023. The second interview with Quy Pham

and the third interview with Thu Le was conducted on the same day, Saturday 22 April 2023. The interviews lasted approximately one hour each. Those conversations were voice-recorded as “the best way to document a focused interview is to record it” (Kananen 2011) which allowed the author to revise what the interviewees had said. The author also took note of important information and additional questions that arose during the interviews.

5.3 Interview findings

The semi-structured interview (Appendix 1) started with professional background and essential questions. The developed conversation follows the discussion of selective suggestions for achieving more sustainable events in Vietnam. These suggestions are built upon synthesis of literature research and personal experience.

5.3.1 Interview with Nga Phan - Communication and Event Coordinator, City of Espoo

Nga Phan is currently responsible for communication plan, media production and coordination of events and the Talent Hub at the City of Espoo. Previously, she worked part-time for FPT software, organizing a variety of events for internal and external communication while she was a university student in Vietnam. She later worked as a PR manager for Uniben Vietnam, where she took care of media and communication, and organized events such as Christmas, Women's Day, holidays, and teambuilding activities.

Drawing from her 10-year plus experiences at diverse multinational organizations and corporations in Vietnam and Finland, she noted distinct differences in event management and organizational styles between the two countries. Vietnamese events often prioritize grandiose visuals, lavish feasting, and abundant entertainment, whereas Finnish events emphasize meaningful content and minimalism.

During the interview, Nga pointed out that “...in Finland, there is a strong focus on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices, which is reflected clearly in the choice of venues, materials, and food. There is also a high level of digitalization in event management, with many tools and platforms available to help organizers plan and execute sustainable events. The waste classification system and environmentally friendly material suppliers are easier to access than in Vietnam”. She thinks that there has been a growing awareness of sustainability in Vietnam in recent years, but it is still not as deeply ingrained in the event industry as it is in Finland. The majority of Vietnamese event organizer’s prioritize budget and spectacle over sustainability, which can easily lead to wasteful practices and environmental harm. There are, however, some positive trends emerging, such as avoiding single-use plastic cutlery and food containers, using locally made and green materials, and increasing availability of digital tools and their accessibility for organizing events.

She also gave observations about Vietnamese participants' preference of backdrops and standees in grandeur events, where they are a must-have for taking photos and checking in. These backdrops have been getting more customized backgrounds and themes which are constantly updated to satisfy people's desires for something new. In contrast, events in Finland tend to have simpler stages, with only a small backdrop or a projection screen.

In term of finding a venue for an event, she perceives that large cities such as Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi have sufficient capacity for different size of events. There are several hotel conference rooms that can accommodate 200 to 1,300 people, national conference centres that can accommodate up to 3,000 people, and stadiums that can accommodate up to 10,000 people. The cities' internal public transportation systems, however, are not so well-equipped and comfortable for users, especially for visitors.

One huge challenge in event management in Vietnam is dealing with leftover food. The underlying reason is the country's culture of eating large and abundant meals in special events. She believes that supporting more vegetarian options would result in more choices and satisfaction for the attendees. On top of that, vegetarian food is likely to cost less than a meat-theme serving due to the abundance and affordability of veggies in Vietnam.

In her opinion, it is important to understand that raising people's awareness is a long-term process. Changing behaviours takes time, so consistent and ongoing communication efforts are necessary to achieve lasting change.

5.3.2 Interview with Quy Pham - CEO and Founder, Backstage Event Agency

Backstage Event Agency provides event planning, sound and lighting production, stage design, and equipment rental in Vietnam. The company has a strong track record in managing a diverse range of events, from offline to hybrid, such as FPT Orange Day 2023, Amber Holding Ambition 2022, S-Fest 2022, FPT Colour me 2019 and mini shows. Many events have thousands of attendees. As a CEO and Founder of Backstage Event, Quy Pham provided the author a comprehensive understanding of the current stage of event industry in Vietnam. Originating from the need to find a new direction for his own company, Backstage Event has researched and trialled a number of sustainable practices. Quy admitted that "... the current trend of the event industry is still mainly economy driven. There are potentials for developing sustainably mainly because some larger brands and corporations have shown pioneer interests. However, sustainable practices in the event industry are more theoretical than practical, and the lack of clear economic benefits has deterred many clients from following through in their event productions."

Quy discussed some topical challenges that sustainable event management in Vietnam is facing. For example, the community's understanding of recycling and waste management is still limited, and as a result, waste separation and disposal remain problematic. Even when new solutions are applied, such as collecting used batteries, there is often a lack of proper disposal methods. Vietnamese culture has not yet adopted a sustainable lifestyle, and technological resources and education systems are not sufficient. In his opinion, even if sustainable practices were showed case when organizing an event, it would only be a demonstration. In the long run, sustainable development needs to be originated from people's everyday lives.

Another challenge, which related directly to selecting an event venue, is the inefficiency and under optimization of the local transportation system. Similar to Ms Nga Phan, Quy thought that the city buses are often inconvenient. Quy also added that although in the two mega-cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, the new train systems are being built, they are not yet completed and possibly insufficient to meet the demands of wide-scale travel. Vietnamese people are not accustomed to walking too much, and the country is among the top populous nations in the world with administrative agencies and residential areas intermingled. This makes overall travel burdensome without personal vehicles, i.e., scooters.

Last but not least, suppliers of environmentally friendly materials such as ink and recycled paper are limited, and the cost of these products remains significantly higher than conventional competitors. Consequently, in many cases where there is a lack of understanding and commitment from event organizers or stakeholders, using these products poses costly and brings back low economic out-comes in a short-term. At the end of the day, companies invest in events to attract customers, and attendees' needs are mainly entertainment-focused rather than sustainability-focused.

In term of digitalization, Quy perceived the trend as popular in event industry in Vietnam. Smart devices are very common nowadays. Applications have been developed rapidly for online ticketing, online banking and transactions, online events and communications and so on.

In the interview, Quy suggested that one important factor for successfully implementing sustainable event management practices in Vietnam is the need for clear guidance and direction from the relevant government agencies. There must be a shared understanding and commitment to sustainable practices from all stakeholders involved in event planning and management. In addition, it is crucial to raise awareness and change the mindset of the public towards sustainability. Without a collective effort and willingness to change, sustainable event management practices may not be fully adopted.

The CEO even proposed to conduct more thorough research on the essence of sustainable events and to create a network to link the like-minded individuals who share the same values. He stressed on the significance of effective communication to event organizers and attendees in Vietnam. The message should focus not only on recycling or being "green" but bring also the added values for the people of Vietnam, e.g., by using locally sourced materials and products. As professionals in the industry who are committed to sustainability, it is important to continually improve ourselves. He believes that by making small changes each day, we can gradually establish a trend toward sustainable practices in the future.

5.3.3 Interview with Thu Le - Sr. Event Executive, Wow Communications Agency

Thu Le has worked in the entertainment industry as a Producer and Event Executive for prominent companies such as Next Entertainment, Group O Agency, and Amberstone Media from 2018 to 2022. She is currently a Senior Event Executive at Wow Communications. She has organized both virtual and live events.

The author noticed that Thu shared a lot of common observations with Ms Nga Phan and Mr Quy Pham. For example, most of large conference rooms are located in the central area but the infrastructures and public transport system are not convenient, resulting in traffic congestion. She added that many venues suitable in terms of physical capacity for large concerts often cause noise pollution for nearby residential areas. The authority has started to restrict those locations for such events, which leads to a situation of either remote area or costly (but suitable) venues.

When sharing about printing issues, she stated that the type and purpose of the event will determine the communication methods which will be used. For example, for a beer-tasting and promotion event in a local area where social media is not effective, banners and flags will be necessary to display event information on the streets. She herself has worked with a big number of activation events, where a lot of banners and posters were printed and displayed along the streets for advertisement. On the other hand, for a popular music event in a big city that attracts young people who are more tech-savvy, social media will be a good option. Material printing can then be reduced. Thu especially said that the event industry has diversified quickly during and after Covid pandemic period. Online events have increased remarkably, and many high-tech applications have been invested and developed. She believed that digitalization would contribute to a more sustainable event industry. She, however, also stated that the larger share of event types would still be on-site in the near future because the Vietnamese people are commonly sociable.

In other matters, she shortly shared that environmental-friendly options have not yet been easily accessible. Vegetarian food is not common in large events. Water-refilling is difficult to implement

due to lack of quality water resources and budget. Food waste is often not a thing to consider if the event venue is a restaurant or hotel as they are expected to handle those as routine work. Otherwise, sufficient collection and disposal of food waste is considered successful.

To summarize, from her experience, the implementation of an event largely depends on the budget set by the clients, and environmental considerations are not yet a priority. It is decisive to have pioneers in the industry and setting good examples will encourage others to follow suit. It is also influential to demonstrate that sustainable events can bring benefits not only to the environment and community but also to the economy.

6 Discussion

6.1 Obstacles when applying sustainable event management in Vietnam

Sustainable event management has gained more attention and application in recent years as event organizers seek to minimize their impact on the environment and promote social and economic sustainability. However, the implementation of actual practices can vary significantly depending on the context in which they are applied (Ferdinand & Kitchin 2017) This is particularly true in Vietnam where sustainable event management is a relatively new concept. Understanding the topical obstacles to sustainable practices enables the development of feasible solutions that are tailored to the local context. (Le 22 April 2023; Pham 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023) It can also help to increase the likelihood of successful implementation, thus leading to more similar events and positive impacts on the environment, society, and the economy. The analysis of findings from literature review and professional interviews provides the author with five fundamental obstacles (for event organizers) towards implementing sustainable event management practices in Vietnam.

Cultural differences create a challenge as traditional practices may not align with sustainable goals. In Vietnam, there is less emphasis on environmental sustainability compared to Finland. The bigger the event, the more likely the Vietnamese organizers tend to focus on impressive visuals and abundant meals. Consequently, the need for material printing and promotion, as well as food waste have always been excessive. (Phan 21 April 2023) Many traditional Vietnamese practices, such as the use of incense or fireworks, can have negative environmental impacts. These practices are deeply rooted in Vietnamese culture and may be difficult to change or eliminate in the context of sustainable event management practices. (Le 22 April 2023; Pham 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023)

Infrastructure and resource limitation such as inadequate waste management facilities, limited renewable energy sources and convenient transportation options make it difficult to conduct sustainable events. Finland is a developed country with advanced infrastructure and technology, many of which are not yet available in Vietnam. Waste management and recycling facilities are less developed in Vietnam, making it more complicated to attempt waste sorting at event sites and compliant disposals afterwards. In many regions, most waste is still burned or disposed of in open pits, which can release harmful toxins into the environment (Pham 22 April 2023). Vietnam's energy grid is heavily reliant on fossil fuels, and it is challenging to select renewable electricity as an energy source (International Trade Administration 2022a; Rogers 2019). Transportation infrastructure is often congested and inefficient, particularly in urban areas. It is relatively hard to find suppliers for sustainable products such as compostable utensils, environmental-friendly ink and eco-friendly cleaning supplies. (Le 22 April 2023; Pham 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023)

High cost is the next challenge which is deeply linked to resource limitations. Finding feasible solutions and adopting sustainable practices can be expensive, in turn many event planners may be hesitant to invest in them due to budget constraints. Additionally, the lack of support and financial incentives from the clients makes it problematic for event planners. Currently, there is also no governmental subsidy for organizing a sustainable event. (Pham 22 April 2023)

The present **regulatory environment** is not specific to sustainability and lacks enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance. There is neither a guideline nor a standardization to evaluate the planning and implementation process of a sustainable event. (Bui & al. 2020; Pham 22 April 2023)

Raising **awareness and education** about the importance and benefits of sustainable practices is needed. For the general population, sustainability is not a widely understood or valued concept in many parts of Vietnam, particularly in rural areas. This can make it difficult to promote sustainable practices and engagement at events, as attendees may not see the relevance of these practices. For clients and even event-organizing professionals, there seems to be insufficient knowledge and necessary skills. Many perceive a sustainable event is associated with mainly reducing negative environmental impacts but very little confidence on social and economic benefits. This may stem from a shortness of access to information, limited education and training opportunities, or a general lack of interest and experience in sustainability issues. (Bui & al. 2020; Pham 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023)

6.2 Sustainable applications to events in Vietnam

This sub-chapter 6.2 will present five aspects for organizing a more sustainable event and examples of adopting them to Vietnamese context. These findings are based on a combination results of literature research, expert interview insights and personal experience. The criteria for selection are mainly:

- Ease of application
- Potential economic benefits
- Practical availability of technology and resources

As discussed in the preceding sub-chapter 6.1, studying the local context will give background for selecting solutions that are feasible for a specific case.

6.2.1 Promote the optimal event venue and sustainable transportation

First and foremost, event organizers should evaluate whether events can be back-to-back, allowing for resource sharing and reducing the need for travel (Helsinki 2020a). The larger an event, the more important it will get when choosing a host city and a venue for it. Fundamentally, if possible, the organizers should hold the event close to the majority of participants to reduce general travel emissions (Jones 2014; Helsinki 2020a). In Vietnam, most often there is a good selection of accommodations, restaurants and amenities near conference halls and stadiums in cities. By prioritizing collaboration with the nearby services instead of only traditional or “low-cost” partners, the organizers can encourage attendees to stay in close proximity by offering special rates or packages for them. Consciously selecting and recommending partners with good services, equal accessibility and responsible practices will contribute further to overall sustainable effort while promoting local businesses. (Bui & al. 2020; Phan 21 April 2023) To assist attendees in finding these accommodations, organizers can provide an up-to-date list of nearby partner hotels and amenities on the event website.

Due to the hot and humid weather in Southern Vietnam, as well as the limitation of local bus services, it is challenging to change the Vietnamese people’s lifestyles of individual car and scooter usage (Le 22 April 2023). However, to reduce travel emissions, group transportation can be promoted more. Carpooling and ridesharing are viable solutions that are already present in Vietnam. (Bui & al. 2020) For example, event organizers can directly partner with popular local services such as Grab, Bee, and GoViet to offer discounts to encourage ride sharing among event attendees. Information about these services can be integrated into the event's marketing websites, invitations, and during the registration processes. (Le 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023) The same can also be applied to bike rentals even though this may not be easily scaled up because the infrastructure in many cities is not optimized for bikes. Overall, a successful greener travel campaign communicated by the event organizers can turn the participants into direct ambassadors for the event’s sustainability goals (Helsinki 2020a).

In a long run, promoting public transport for mass travel would be ideal for such country with large population and densely developed cities as Vietnam. In major cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, in order to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in traffic, there have been some initiatives. For example, the metro systems in Hanoi already have a few stations completed and operated. Another example, bringing a green and convenient experience to people, VinBus Ecological Transport Service officially put into operation the first electric bus route in Vietnam. VinBus operates a fleet of electric buses that run on renewable energy, reducing noise pollution and environmental impacts of transportation (Báo Ảnh Việt Nam 2022). It is soon possible for

organizers to encourage event attendees to travel by a variety of public transport in a more sustainable way.

At the largest scale for international happenings or nationwide events, a venue that is close to the airport or main train station would be the idealist. With the rise of fast-speed internet and dedicated online platforms, event organizers can also consider a virtual or hybrid meeting instead of fully face-to-face events. They are a significantly more environmentally friendly option as the biggest carbon emissions of an event, which is associated with travelling (Headbox 2023; Jones 2014), is reduced markedly. Besides, halving the number of on-site participants, their respective consumption and long-distance travelling may be very beneficial for the overall event budget and air quality (Raj & Musgrave 2009).

6.2.2 Control excessive material printing

In Vietnam, the price of A-4 papers and basic printing is on average a few cents per sheet. Additionally, as researched previously, paper is the most used marketing material and banners and standees are one of the most popular choices for advertising and decorations. The initial cost is so low which often leads to a large amount of material printing being produced. According to a survey conducted in the USA and Canada in 2018, up to 29% of event budgets were spent on printed materials, such as banners and standees (Eventbrite 2018). While there is no similar data available for Vietnam, the figure is not likely any less in large events.

However, with the like of widespread use of smart devices, it is becoming very practical for Vietnamese organizers to follow the trend and move faster to use online application and cloud storage, such as Google Drive, Google Sheet, and Google Slide, to map their plans, discuss and make changes. In terms of actual production materials, where possible, designing documentations, backdrops, signs, and banners should be without specific dates. They will be easily reused for periodically organized or multiple different events. (Jones 2014; Phan 21 April 2023) If material printing is necessary, consider the reverse side of used paper for draft print and utilize double-sided printing and/or recycled paper for final production. Direct reduction of material printing will greatly reduce waste and expenses. (Le 22 April 2023; Osborne 2015; Phan 21 April 2023)

In recent years, the event industry in Vietnam has started to use more and more LED screens for backdrop and background in grand events (Cyber Show 2014; Le 22 April 2023; Pham 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023). For example, an event of Saigon Beer Company used LED screen as shown in Figure 7. Around the world, LED walls have been a favored option for outdoor video display, and its popularity is steadily on the rise for indoor use as well. Easy, efficient, and bright, LED is a great choice for various settings, and in some cases the perfect alternative for video projection.

LED screens are flexible in terms of their size and shape, allowing for greater creative freedom in event design. With the cost of LED technology reducing over the year and their super lifespan even extending, its application should be promoted more, whenever the budget allows. (Avalliance 2021; Cyber Show 2014)



Figure 7. LED screens are being used in an event. (Cyber Show 2014)

6.2.3 Use environmentally friendly materials and reuse props

For most type of events, the majority of materials will become waste (Helsinki 2020a). In the context of sustainable event management, the "3-R" principle, which stands for reduce, reuse, and recycle, is an essential guideline to follow in order to minimize waste, save costs and in turn, reduce the environmental impact of events.

In Vietnamese event industry, single-use plastics due to conveniency and low cost in beverage and food serving can be reduced by using actual tableware or biodegradable alternatives depending on the actual logistics (Le 22 April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023). For most types of events, event organizers often set up water stations with plastic water bottles for attendees. To reduce this, water tanks at water stations can be optimized to encourage participants to bring their reusable water bottles (Bui & al. 2020; Jones 2014; Osborne 2015; Tapaus s.a.). This change can significantly reduce the amount of plastic waste generated at events while promoting sustainable practices among attendees. Personal and reusable food and drink container from participants shall be promoted and rewarded, e.g., by giving discounts and/or honorable badges. If implemented carefully, these can not only raise awareness but also initiate sustainable actions among event attendees after the event.

Create reusable constructions, decorations, stands, props, and marketing items have actually been a traditional practice in the event industry in Vietnam (Bui & al. 2020; Le 22 April 2023; Pham 22

April 2023; Phan 21 April 2023). However, it is necessary to restate that the choice of materials which are durable and environmental-friendly should be employed. At the end of the day, all the small actions must be consciously made towards a unified responsible goal. Sustainable actions are marketed and reflected also through the type of materials used in event production. In parallel, event organizers should try to avoid personalized props, such as lanyards, badge holders, ribbons, and other materials. One example application was demonstrated by Backstage Event Agency while running the Orange Day event for FPT schools. Orange Day event was organized in multiple location across Vietnam. Backstage Event was contracted only for the happening in Hanoi. They convinced the client to utilize used fabric and bamboo to make the entrance gate and stage (Figure 8). The stage decoration may look less aesthetically pleasing compared to laminated printing materials, but it was well-functional and coherent with the client's sustainable operation strategy. Moreover, the fabric pieces could be extensively reused in other events or easily recycled if damaged. (Pham 22 April 2023)



Figure 8. Orange Day's fabric stage. (FPT Schools 2023)

Being smart and increasing recycling can be a fine combination for event organizers. Instead of mass-production of cheap gifts purely for advertising purposes, event organizers can divert to employing ethically produced giveaways or repurposed gifts from collected old materials (in previous events) (Pham 22 April 2023). There are many other green initiatives in Vietnam which would serve as excellent partners for materials collections and recycling. For example, Green Hub seeks to collaborate on sustainable initiatives in repurposing waste banners into shopping bags. Reform

Plastic Vietnam offers recycled furniture items, such as tables and chairs made from plastic panels, for use at events. (Bui & al. 2020) In addition, The Circular Action Program (CAP), run by Tetra Pak and the Packaging Recycling Organization Vietnam Event, is a customized service based on engaging all actors in the waste supply chain and providing incentives for collection, sorting, and recycling of carton waste products (BVRio 2022). Through partnership with these actors, the logistics and supply chain of an event will become more innovative, flexible, and responsible at the same time.

6.2.4 Handle food responsibly

Food and beverage are usually the second-largest cause of the carbon footprint of an event (Tapaus s.a.). Vietnam is a strong agricultural country with diverse agricultural products. It makes sense for event organizers to make use of locally grown produce in their food and beverage offerings (Jones 2014; Phan 21 April 2023). For example, an event in central mountainous region Dak Lak could feature dishes made with locally grown rich avocados, which are in season during the summer months. Or an event in Da Lat valley could showcase dishes made with locally planted strawberries, which are in season during the winter months. There are also abundant harvests all year round, such as Nam Dinh bananas, dragon fruits, Hoa Loc mangos, Ninh Binh pineapples and so on. By taking these advantages, it helps to minimize the amount of transportation required to get the food to the event, thereby reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, seasonal produce is generally fresher and more flavorful, which brings a more satisfying culinary experience to event participants.

Additionally, opting for plant-based foods over meat-based options can contribute to carbon footprint reduction significantly because meat production generates much higher emissions than plant cultivation. In Vietnam, there is now an increased acceptance of vegetarianism, and this has led to the emergence of more vegetarian restaurants and more accessible information. Event organizers should consider adding vegan options to the menu to offer to the growing number of attendees who are vegan or vegetarian (Tapaus s.a.). For instance, a light event could offer a buffet-style lunch with a variety of salads, vegetable- and fruit-based dishes, and refreshments. This not only caters to vegans and vegetarians but also provides the crowds with a healthy and refreshing option (Jones 2014)

In terms of sourcing and catering food, it is crucial to find a caterer who has experience in preparing healthy meals and sources their ingredients from responsible, and preferably local sources. This applies not only to vegetarian food but also to traditional meat and fish. Furthermore, by carefully sourcing and prioritizing ingredients that can be stored for long periods whenever possible, event organizers can reduce the risk of spoilage and prevent unnecessary food waste.

Another key consideration that should be implemented in Vietnamese events is the practice of minimizing food waste by appropriately sized and planned menus. Food and beverage offerings should focus on experience and wellness instead of abundance. By working closely together with caterers on the event budget and objectives, event organizers can offer smaller portions and a greater variety of dishes rather than large portions of fewer dishes. This approach contributes to food waste reduction and allows attendees the opportunity to sample a greater selection of cuisine.

For the amount of food, which is unused anyway, event organizers can consider providing attendees with reusable containers or encourage them to bring their own to take home any leftovers. Another option is to collaborate with charity and shelters to distribute it to those who are in need after the event. (Osborne 2015) During the event itself, designated biodegradable food collection bins and even better, electric composting machine bins should be deployed on-site. Quy Pham suggested one promising product, which he has been researching for applying in events of Backstage Event. Oklin offers different types of composting machines that are designed for varied sizes (ECOVietnam s.a.). For instance, the Oklin GG02 (Figure 9) electric composting machine is perfect for generating 4-5 kg of biowaste per day. Its basic cycles need only 24 hours to process, and the after-product could be used for, e.g., plantation. Another channel is partnering with green projects such as Larva Yum, which centers around biowaste collection and upcycling organic waste into high-protein feed for livestock, poultry, and fish aquaculture (Larvayum s.a.). Finally, technology can also assist in tracking and analyzing consumption patterns and waste generation which facilitates better planning and adjusting menus and ordering. These partnerships form a steppingstone for a more circular logistics and streamlined processes in event planning, with the mission of promoting more responsible events, for a healthy life and for a sustainable future.



Figure 9. Oklin GG02 - Electric composting machine. (ECO Vietnam s.a.)

6.2.5 Go digital

Digitalization has become an essential part of modern events, and event organizers can take advantage of it to help to reduce resource consumption, minimize waste generation, and enhance engagement with stakeholders. With the rapid evolution of internet communication technologies, diverse choices of electronic experiences are offered ranging from e-tickets, e-vouchers, e-receipts, e-guidebooks, e-docs, e-planners to e-certificates. (Bui & al. 2020; Osborne 2015) In a simple manner, electronic documentation available online or sent by email gives flexibility for mobile access and download if needed (Raj & Musgrave 2009). More enhanced, a mobile application or website service can free up a big part of printing and communication material costs for event planners while allowing attendees to give feedback and find information instantly (Jones 2014). In everyday life, social media platforms can be used continuously to reach a wider audience, promote, and provide updates. In line with preceding research (Osborne 2015; Raj & Musgrave 2009; Tapaus s.a.), all professional interviewees suggested that digitalizing an event is one of the most feasible solutions to make an event more sustainable as it always guarantees to avoid a great quantity of physical printing and other waste generation before, during and after an event.

For annual repeated events at a large scale, it can be very beneficial to invest in an own event application (Phan 21 April 2023). Such applications should provide a centralized platform for all event-related information such as schedules, speaker bios, maps, registrations, discussion, and other important items. It will help attendees navigate the event more efficiently and raise the overall experience. For event organizers, an own mobile app can help to collect more detailed data and feedback, while increasing brand visibility. For partners and sponsors, such app provides opportunities for advertisement and (customer-) engagement. (Slush 2022b; Tapaus s.a.)

Another advantage of going digital is the ability to reach a wider audience. Consider hosting your event on a virtual platform that allows attendees to participate from anywhere in the world without the need for travel or overcoming other barriers. Platforms such as Zoom, Skype, or other video conferencing software can be used to host virtual conferences, meetings, or webinars. Overall, going digital for an event provides new experiment opportunities for innovation and creativity in production, which is a smart and forward-thinking approach that can deliver numerous benefits for all stakeholders involved.

6.3 The importance of raising awareness

Many individuals do not fully comprehend the nature of environmental problems, nor do they understand the links between event production, planning, participation, and their negative impacts on the surroundings (Bui & al. 2020). During the three interviews, it was common to receive the

opinion that the greatest obstacle to applying sustainable event management methods in the Vietnamese event industry is the lack of people's awareness.

Raising awareness can assist different stakeholders in understanding the unfavorable impacts that events may have on the environment and how sustainable practices can reduce those impacts. Raising awareness measures are for example public communication, official research and dissemination, sustainability inclusion in academic education and further professional trainings. As individuals become more informed, the demand for environmentally friendly goods and services grows, encouraging manufacturers and service providers to offer more sustainable alternatives. For event organizers, customers, suppliers, and venues to make the shift to sustainability while reaping financial rewards, they must be convinced. (Pham 22 April 2023)

Without proper marketing and communication, sustainable practices will not be well received or developed. It is critical to begin raising awareness as early as possible in the event planning process. Event organizers can communicate through a variety of channels, including social media, email newsletters and event websites. Social media is a powerful tool for communication and spreading the word about sustainability goals and environmental-friendly practices. (Jones 2014; Pham 22 April 2023)

In addition to early communication, it is important to maintain awareness-raising throughout the event. This can be done through signage, announcements, and displays that highlight sustainable practices being implemented at the event. By keeping attendees informed and engaged, they will be more likely to adopt these practices in their own events and everyday lives. (Jones 2014)

After each event, organizers can send a follow-up email or survey to attendees to thank them for their participation and highlight the sustainability initiatives & results that were implemented. Additionally, they can provide information about how attendees can continue to practice sustainability in their own lives, such as by reducing their energy consumption, recycling more, or choosing sustainable products. (Pham 22 April 2023)

To promote long-term awareness raising, one way is to establish partnerships with organizations and individuals who are committed to sustainability (Pham 22 April 2023). Local environmental groups, academic institutions, or government agencies can collaborate to create educational programs and initiatives that promote sustainable practices (Phan 21 April 2023). Communication and training programs shall be tailored to socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status and education level to ensure effective outreach. To finish, raising awareness is a continuous and indispensable part when heading toward sustainable event management.

7 Conclusion

The thesis has provided valuable insights into the state of sustainable event management in Finland and Vietnam. Finland has a longer history of promoting sustainable development through public dialogue and participation, which has established a comprehensive system to support implementing sustainable practices in the event industry. In contrast, in Vietnam, the concept of sustainability is relatively new, and sustainable practices in the event industry are not yet a familiar experience. There is a growing but limited awareness of the importance of sustainability in event management. It is typical to see many events still produce substantial amounts of waste, excessive material printing and single-use equipment.

This research has revealed various barriers that Vietnamese event organizers are facing when heading towards sustainable solutions. It is crucial for these organizers to be mindful of cultural differences, infrastructure and resources limitation, budget vs cost level and regulatory frameworks. Building upon these challenges and other data collection during the thesis, feasible solutions and suggestions for organizing a more sustainable event in the Vietnam have been presented extensively in the Discussion Chapter. Moreover, the author has highlighted the significance of understanding the local context in which events take place, as well as the need for awareness-raising, effective communication, education and training to foster a sustainable transformation of the industry in the long run.

Further research is needed to identify more opportunities for sustainable event management in Vietnamese cultural and economic conditions. It would be beneficial to conduct deeper case studies and/or quantitative research with numerical data for diverse comparison and further analysis to advance the knowledge on the topic in the local contexts. Nonetheless, this thesis work contributes to the growing body of knowledge on global sustainable event management and the findings can serve as an early guide for event organizers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the Vietnamese event industry.

7.1 Personal learning reflection

Upon completing this thesis, the author was able to reflect on her personal learning journey in detail. From the initial research and planning stages to the final revisions and edits, the author was constantly challenged and pushed out of her comfort zone.

Firstly, the topic had been of deep interest for the author for a period but the thought of pursuing it as a thesis work was not obvious. The author was inspired after experiences in the event industry in Finland throughout her two-year journey until the time. Despite the concept of sustainable event

management seems to have emerged only during the last decade, there have been extensive studies, demonstrations, and applications in various event types and sizes in Finland. In contrast, there was not so much data and academic research done regarding the Vietnamese event industry and event management practice. It was soon recognized that a thorough plan and delimitation had to be drawn so that the work could be manageable. Throughout the initial literature research, shaping of the actual focus and the layout of the thesis report turned out to be a lengthy process. The search for relevant and reliable information was a demanding operation.

Secondly, the author gained insights into how to write a thesis that is logical and informative. By carefully considering the structure and the flow of her arguments, she was able to present her research in a comprehensive manner. She also learned the importance of providing evidence and examples to support claims, and of acknowledging and addressing potential counterarguments. The decision to take semi-structured interviews as a mean of research was partially because when making those conversations, the author has a chance to explore and dive into more practical information and interact with the interviewees.

Thirdly, a key takeaway for the author was the power of perseverance. There were times when they felt overwhelmed and discouraged, but they kept pushing forward and reminding themselves of the end goal. For example, the search to arrange interviews and transcribe was surely an important but difficult and time-consuming task, even with the help of technology. Ultimately, this persistence paid off and the author was able to produce a final contended product.

Fourthly, one of the biggest lessons the author learned was the importance of time management and external help. The author quickly realized that procrastination would only lead to stress and rushed work, she made a conscious effort to stay on top of her tasks and break them down into smaller, more manageable chunks. The author discovered the value of seeking feedback from others. By sharing her work with peers and professors, she received valuable feedback with perspectives that aided her to refine the ideas and writing arguments.

Overall, the thesis writing process taught the author beneficial skills and lessons for her future endeavours. The professional information which she learned and the new contacts she has made were greatly rewarding. The author is grateful for the experience and looks forward to applying the knowledge in her later work.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. Could you please introduce yourself briefly?
2. Can you provide an overview of the current state of the event industry in Vietnam? How has it evolved over the past few years, and what do you see as the main trends?
3. I have proposed five aspects that are widely applied in Finland that I think it could be implemented by event organizers in Vietnam to minimize the negative impact of events, and we will discuss the applicability of these aspects in more detail:
 - a. Choosing the appropriate event venue involves selecting a location with a convenient transportation system, accessible public transport, and nearby hotels.
 - i. For what size and type of event is this option suitable?
 - ii. What is the likely impact of this option on costs?
 - b. Control printing issues by restricting the printing of banners and posters with specific date information to enable their use for other events, utilizing two-sided printing, and environmentally friendly ink suppliers, recycled paper, and LED screens for displaying banners and backdrops, among others.
 - i. What are some of the challenges you have encountered when trying to reduce printing for events, and how have you addressed these challenges?
 - ii. What is the price range of printing equipment in Vietnam?
 - iii. What is the cost of machinery and equipment?
 - c. Use environmentally friendly materials and reuse props by preferring reusable knives and forks or disposable knives and spoons; have props storage to reuse in many programs.
 - i. How do you address issues of waste management and disposal at events, and what strategies have been successful in reducing waste and promoting recycling?
 - ii. Are there any local suppliers that can provide environmentally friendly products in Vietnam?
 - d. Use food responsibly by offering vegetarian options to attendees and devising a practical plan for handling remaining food after the event.
 - i. Have you offered vegan or sustainable meal options at events before, and what was the response from participants?
 - ii. Is consideration of attendees' dietary needs popular among events in Vietnam?
 - iii. How much does it cost to use vegan products?
 - iv. How difficult is it to handle the food left over after the event?

- e. Go digital by utilizing mobile applications to promote and update event information; organizing online events instead of offline for some events; using online surveys instead of paper surveys; sending invitations or event information or even event posters via emails; etc.
 - i. Online events are gradually becoming more popular, especially after the COVID pandemic. Do you think the future of online events will develop further and become an indispensable part of the events industry?
 - ii. What are the advantages and disadvantages of going digital for events, and how can these be addressed?
 - iii. Is it challenging to develop an application? What events in Vietnam are appropriate for such applications?
- 4. In your experience, what are some of the key cultural or economic factors that need to be considered when implementing sustainable event management practices in Vietnam, and how can these factors be addressed?
- 5. Have you encountered any challenges or objections from event organizers or attendees when trying to incorporate sustainability practices into events? If so, how have these challenges been addressed?
- 6. How do you communicate the importance of sustainable event management practices to event organizers and attendees, and what strategies have been most effective in raising awareness and encouraging behaviour change?