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Developing an Events Strategy to encourage Technology Adoption within Small and Medium Enterprises

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research (MA) in Business and Management Studies

University of Huddersfield

Supervisors: Janna Wood/Andrew Jenkins

February 2021

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where indicated in text and references.

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters by Research in Business and Management Studies at the University of Huddersfield.

I acknowledge that this dissertation has not been previously submitted in any form, either at the University of Huddersfield or any other institution.

Signed: **Jordan Furness**

Date: **05/02/2021**

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make up a large percentage of businesses within the United Kingdom, many often struggle to successfully maintain a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive economy. One method of creating this advantage is the utilisation of new technologies within their organisation, however there are often barriers that an SME will face in the process of adopting a new technology. This study aims to examine how events can be used as a tool to overcome these. There is a significant level of research into the impact of 'mega-events' but research that looks at small business focused events and the impact they can have is limited.

The literature review examines the barriers to technology adoption that a SME faces and looks at the impact of business-focused events upon those who attend. Interviews then took place with five event professionals who have years of experience in event management. With the data from the interviews analysed, a questionnaire was then distributed to several SMEs to collect responses from those who were likely to attend business focused events. An analysis of the data collected highlighted that the main barrier to technology adoption was a lack of knowledge with regards to new technologies and their capabilities. The results of the questionnaire highlighted that the individuals attended events to increase their knowledge base and it could be suggested from this that events can be used as a positive tool in overcoming barriers to technology adoption. Data collected from the event professionals played a key role in developing a framework that can be used to organise business-focused events for those who work for SMEs.

The outcomes of this thesis can be used to gain a better understanding of the barriers to technology adoption facing SMEs and provide useful recommendations for event organisers to use whilst planning events. Further research could include a study to test the effectiveness of the framework developed. Additional research could also use the methodology to see how/if attendance motivations change depending on the size of the organisation that the individual works for.

1.0 Introduction

Technology adoption can have multiple meanings depending on the context in which it is used, for this thesis it can be explained as the utilisation of a new technology within an organisation (Mohd Zawawi et al., 2016). There are numerous benefits that this can bring to an organisation such as: a reduction in production costs, an improved level of quality and an expanded product range (Ionescu & Dumitru, 2015). However, there are several barriers to technology adoption to which an organisation can face which can include: increased costs, knowledge gaps with relation to the latest developments and a lack of time to implement changes within the organisation (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019). These barriers can be more difficult to overcome in Small and Medium Enterprises as they can often have cash flow issues within their organisation and an increased likelihood of knowledge gaps of the primary decision maker (Hatten 2012, Chao & Chandra (2012).

Events can be classified into multiple typologies; each area of events is unique in its nature and will have different characteristics (Somekh & Lewin, 2008). Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde (2012) suggest that business events can be categorised by using the acronym MINCE: Meetings, Incentives, Networking, Conferences and Exhibitions. There are two main benefits that attending a MINCE can bring to the individual attending, both 'professional value' and knowledge transfer (Ramirez, Laing & Mair, 2013 and Mitchell, Schlegelmilch & Mone, 2016)

1.1 Relevance and importance

The importance of SMEs within the UK economy is huge. In 2018 there were over 5.7 million active SMEs, with 60% of private sector employment coming from SMEs, as well 52% of all private sector turnover (Federation of Small Businesses, 2018). With the benefits of technology adoption highlighted in a 2019 report by the UK Government of the importance of SME performance to the success of the UK economy, the UK Government have recently invested record levels of funds into projects which aim to increase levels of technology adoption within SMEs (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019). Indeed this is not a new phenomenon, over the past ten years the UK Government has developed a strategy based upon a report by Hauser (2010) proposing a new approach to investment in Technology and Innovation Centres (TICs) within the UK to offer SMEs access to research and development technologies and expertise that would otherwise be inaccessible (Hauser, 2014).

1.2 Rationale

This research is taking place as research into both technology adoption and event attendance motivations with relation to SMEs is limited, only recently have the barriers to technology adoption

in relation to SMEs come to the forefront of UK Government policy (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019). Prior to this, studies related to SMEs had predominantly looked at the impact of adopting new IT systems (Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky, 2012). This is a similar story within event-based research as studies that examine the impact of smaller, more regionally focused events are often limited, instead much of the research focuses on large scale global events, where even the acronym 'SME' can represent something entirely different (Giulianotti & Klauser, 2010). One possible explanation for why this could be is according to Karlsson, Booth & Odenrick (2007) is that academics can often become frustrated with working with SMEs as this is often seen as less prestigious than working with a larger multi-national company. It is for this reason that the barriers to technology adoption in SMEs are being explored in greater detail as well as the benefits of attending business events, in order to explore if events can be utilised as a method to reduce the barriers to technology adoption.

1.3 Research question, aim and objectives

The purpose of a research question is to highlight what the research project will aim to find out and answer (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). As Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) state the development of a research question will influence several aspects of the research such as: choice of literature, sample size and data collection methods. For this thesis, the research question is:

How can business-focused events be used to encourage technology adoption within Small and Medium Enterprises?

A research aim is closely linked to the research question and its purpose is to provide a brief statement on the purpose of the paper (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The research aim for this paper is:

Develop an events strategy to promote technology adoption targeted at Small and Medium Enterprises.

However, the question/ aim alone is not sufficient in detail to explain the thesis. To assist in meeting the question/ aim of this paper a series of research objectives have been developed, according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) this will allow for a greater sense of purpose and direction within the thesis.

1.3.1 Research Objective 1

Develop an understanding of the characteristics commonly associated with Small and Medium Enterprises and how these can act as barriers to technology adoption.

This objective involves developing an understanding of the common business traits associated with SMEs and gain an insight into the barriers to technology adoption that SMEs face. The collection of research related to this objective will also assist in the development of an events strategy as it will provide a greater understanding of the target audience that these events are aimed at.

1.3.2 Research Objective 2

Assess the key elements that a Small and Medium Enterprise would like to gain from attending an event.

This objective aims to understand what an individual who works within an SME wants to take away from attending the event. Through developing an understanding of the motivations that the individual has for attending, this can assist the event organiser in the development of the event.

1.3.3 Research Objective 3

Develop an insight into the organisation involved in a successful event for Small and Medium Enterprises.

The purpose of this objective is to utilise the knowledge of experienced event organisers in conjunction with an academic framework in order to produce a model which can assist in the development of a successful event for individuals who work for SMEs. Not only will the experience from the event organisers be key in meeting this objective but also knowledge gained in relation to objective 2 will be utilised.

The objectives of this thesis are formulated with a linear structure. If the barriers to technology adoption and common traits of SMEs are understood, then highlighting SME attendance motivations will show if individuals who are employed by SMEs can attend events to help reduce the barriers to technology adoption within their organisation. If this is the case, then the final objective aims to develop a framework to produce events which will target those employed by SMEs. The data collected from these individual objectives will be brought together in relation to the overall research question during the conclusion of this thesis.

1.4 Overview of the structure

Firstly, a two-part Literature Review has been developed to analyse the two main areas that this thesis will explore: technology adoption within SMEs and the business events sector. Analysis of the barriers to technology adoption within SMEs will provide rich information in relation to research objective 1 and the exploration into the business events sector will provide a platform for the data collection in relation to research objective 2 and 3. The methodology section shows that a mixed

methods strategy is being utilised for the purposes of data collection, both methods will be critically analysed throughout this section.

The next stage will then present the findings from the data collection, analysis of the qualitative data is through thematic analysis and the quantitative data analysis is through frequency analysis. Following this is the discussion section, where the findings will be presented in relation to the research objectives, as well as the research in the literature review. The conclusion to this thesis includes: a final summary of the data collected in relation to the research objectives, areas for future potential studies highlighted and recommendations presented.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of this study was the relatively small sample size used for the collection of data. The number of events organisers interviewed and the number of survey responses was relatively low. The predominant issue that having a small sample size for data collection is that it can potentially affect the validity of the data collected. A small sample size means that the researcher is unable to gain a broad spectrum of thoughts and opinions, which would further assist in establishing the validity of the collected data.

The weaknesses of the methodology also contribute to the limitations of the study. The predominant issue with the methodology was that there was no pilot interview. However, the interview questions were checked for clarity. As no pilot interviews were conducted the validity of the data collected as part of the interview phase could be impacted, as the interview questions were not trialled on a test subject before the initial interview took place. As such the researcher did not have a clear idea if the questions were suitable for the interviewee and did not fully recognise if the questions could provide data that the researcher was looking to collect.

A final limitation of the study that arose during the end of the research was that, as the data had been collected before the current COVID-19 crisis, the data does not consider how both the opinions and thoughts of event organisers and attendees may have been impacted. This could be a further area for research in the future, to analyse if/how thoughts and opinions have changed and how the outcomes of this dissertation differ.

2.0 Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to allow the researcher to provide a justification as to why the research is taking place (Arshed & Danson, 2015). A detailed literature review will allow the researcher to identify areas of research for potential development through an analysis of the existing literature (Arshed & Danson, 2015). This literature review will aim to provide an understanding of both areas that this thesis is examining, the barriers to technology adoption within SMEs and the impacts of business-related events.

To begin this chapter, it is important to understand what is meant by the term Small and Medium Enterprise (SME). As stated by Rhodes (2018) the most used definition of an (SME) is any business with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50 million, of which there were 5.7 million within the United Kingdom in 2018.

2.1 Technology Adoption

The term technology is one that has several definitions and concepts associated to it according to Wahab, Rose & Osman (2012). At this stage of the thesis it is important to clearly explain what technology is referring to in this thesis. For the purposes of this research, the term technology will refer to a new technological innovation which is defined as the creation of a new good or service also including the implementation of new thinking and ideas (Mohd Zawawi et al., 2016).

As Park (2017) suggests, technology adoption is a form of innovation whereby an organisation will utilise a new form of technology within their operations. As Ionescu & Dumitru (2015) state, just some of the many benefits that can result from this include: an increase in market share, an improved level of quality and an expanded product range. According to Tohidi & Jabbari (2012) technology adoption has always been a factor in the levels of success that a business has. Those organisations that have created a culture based around it have often been those that have capitalised on new opportunities. Martin-de-Castro et al., (2013) suggest that the main benefit it can bring is the competitive advantage that it can provide.

2.1.1 Technology Adoption Theory

At present, much of the thinking around technology adoption has revolved around the consumer, and their willingness to accept newer technology within their own lives (Straub, 2009). Examples of such theories which predominantly focus on the consumer include: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), Technology Acceptance Model (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) and Technology Readiness (Parasuraman & Colby, 2001).

One of the most prominent theories that can be used to analyse both the individual consumer and business reaction to technology adoption is the Diffusion of Innovation theory, originally developed by Everett Rogers (Rogers, 1962). Within this theory Rogers suggests that there are five steps that are involved when an organisation decides on whether to implement an innovation: Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation and Confirmation (Rogers, 2003). The process starts with the knowledge stage, the first and most important part according to Sahin (2006) which focuses on understanding the technologies that are available/ how to use these technologies and how they can be beneficial. This theory was utilised and subsequently developed by Nguyen (2009), to be utilised within the context of an SME. As with the original Rogers theory, one of the key elements in this framework is that there needs to be a significant level of knowledge of the innovation and the benefits it can provide with the major decision makers in the organisation (Nguyen, 2009).

However, Edler & Fagerberg (2017) suggest that there is an issue of using various adaptations that are based upon Rogers' work, as most studies only examine the impact that technology adoption can have on multi-national corporations (Edler & Fagerberg, 2017). According to Barrane, Karuranga & Poulin (2018) the main problem, particularly with modern research, even studies that have been undertaken with an SME as the primary focus, have been based around the implementation of innovations from the information and communications sector.

2.2 Technology Adoption within SMEs

The main benefit of technology adoption within SMEs as stated by Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012) is that it can allow them to compete better against their competition, as the utilisation of new technologies can increase the capabilities of an organisation. It is vitally important for an SME to keep up to date with the latest advances in technology to keep themselves competitive with larger organisations (Morris, Kocak and Ozer, 2007). However, Morris, Kocak & Ozer (2007) suggest that SMEs can often struggle with the adoption of new technologies for multiple reasons. As technology adoption is of huge importance for an SME, this section will analyse a framework that is used to identify the barriers to technology adoption.

2.2.1 Small Business Technology Adoption Model

The Small Business Technology Adoption Model (SBTAM) highlights the factors that influence technology adoption within a SME (Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky, 2012). This model is shown in Figure 1. According to Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012) the purpose of this model is to explore the relationships between the key decision maker in the SME and external environmental factors which will influence how likely an individual will be to invest in a new technology, something which in previous models had not been analysed in detail. This highlights the three main areas that are likely to impact an individual's decision on whether to adopt a new technology: owner characteristics, owner perceptions and environmental factors. This framework is highly valuable for the purposes of this research as it highlights what the barriers to technology that an SME faces. In addition to this it can highlight the barriers that can be influenced such as product class knowledge and education whilst also showing those which cannot, such as age and market uncertainty.
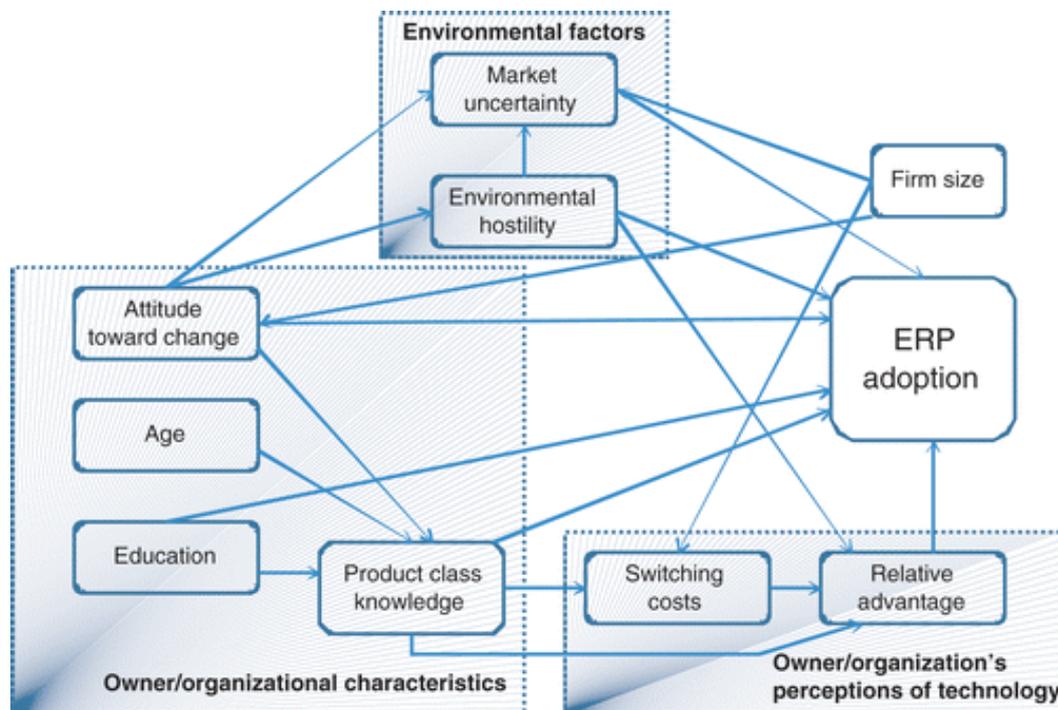
Figure 1 Small Business Technology Adoption Model (Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky, 2012)

Further information with regards to the definition of each factor and the results from the study by Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012) can be found in the Appendix 1.

Although this model highlights multiple factors that can affect the likelihood of technology adoption, as discussed by Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012), the most prominent factor that is likely to impact the decision is the relative advantage the key decision maker understands that the new technology will bring to the organisation. In this model the two main factors which contribute towards the understanding of the relative advantage are: product class knowledge and switching

costs. However, as the study upon which the framework is based is only focused on one new technology in one sector, this could impact the suitability of the framework for use in other sectors in which SMEs operate.

2.3 Barriers to Technology Adoption

Through an analysis of the SBTAM model, it is evident that there are several significant barriers to technology adoption that an SME faces. Although Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012) describe the areas that they believe to have the greatest impact on a decision maker within the SME, to fully understand the level of impact that these factors have they must be linked to the common characteristics of SMEs, as opposed to the one individual making the decision. The following section will aim to highlight these factors that have the most impact upon the decision of an individual and the organisation. It will also aim to show those factors that can be positively influenced by an external organisation.

2.3.1 Costs

According to Aren & Sibindi (2014), many SME owners place considerable importance on a healthy cash flow to the success of their business. Hatten (2012) suggests that the ability to manage cash flow successfully is one of the most important elements of successfully operating an SME. Although the initial costs of the implementation of a new technology can often fluctuate, it is often a huge outlay, particularly for an SME (Gnyawali & Park, 2009). As Chwastyk & Kołosowski (2014) suggest although costs can be estimated for each stage of the development, these can be littered with inaccuracies if not performed correctly which can further increase strain on cash flow. Another major financial impact is the rapid rate at which a technology can soon become outdated and will need to be replaced, should that be the direction of the organisation (Nugroho, Susilo, Fajar & Rahmawati, 2017). This is highlighted in the SBTAM model whereby Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012) suggest that the associated switching costs can impact the individual's assessment of the relative advantage of adopting the new technology and therefore their decision of whether to proceed with the technology adoption.

2.3.2 Knowledge Gaps

One of the main characteristics of successful technology adoption within an SME is the knowledge of the new technology of the primary decision maker within that organisation and how can it benefit the business (Thong & Yap, 1995; Drew, 2003, Urbancova, 2013). However, it is suggested by Chao & Chandra (2012) that there are often gaps in the knowledge of the decision maker within the SME, mainly due to the time pressures and constraints that are placed on them. Without the full understanding of the benefits/ drawbacks it is possible that implementation of a new technology can

be detrimental to the organisation in the long term (Chao & Chandra, 2012). Once again this is highlighted as a key factor in the decision to adopt technology by Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012) who state that a lack of understanding the benefits of adopting a new technology can negatively influence the individual's willingness to proceed.

2.3.3 Time

According to Mehrtens, Cragg & Mills, (2001) another difficulty that can hamper technology adoption within SMEs is the time that the technology takes to become fully operational. Panagiotakopoulos (2011) states that staff will need to be up to date with the latest technology and have the correct level of training. All of which will take time away from doing their regular job. Matlay (1999) suggests that smaller firm owners often have a negative opinion of the time associated with training and development. This opinion was further advocated in a recent study of SMEs in the Yorkshire region which suggested that staff training on new technologies can be difficult due to the levels of investment that are necessary, particularly in relation to the amount of time that is required to successfully understand often complex technologies (Devitt, 2017).

2.4 Can these difficulties be overcome?

The following section will look at two ways in which these barriers can be overcome and what assistance is in place for SMEs to help them to invest in new technologies and reap the benefits that technology adoption can bring.

2.4.1 Coopetition

Recently, studies have suggested that it would be beneficial for SMEs that operate in similar industries to collaborate with competitors, this is known as 'coopetition' (Dorn, 2016). Although there has not been a specific definition of the concept of 'coopetition' produced, Morris, Kocak, & Özer (2007) state that it is generally viewed as a blend of co-operation and competition between a number of businesses which can result in developing greater levels of economies of scale, reducing risk and providing a greater utilisation of shared resources. A study by Huang & Yu (2010) suggests that cases of business to business 'coopetition' has resulted in a positive outcome for most parties involved.

However, the practical implications of running a scheme such as this between two SMEs in direct competition maybe difficult for several reasons according to Rothaermel & Deeds (2004). Firstly, SMEs may be reluctant to give away what they see as a loss of control of their business by allowing competitors an insight into their operations (Rothaermel & Deeds, 2004). This is a view that is also shared by Katila, Rosenberger & Eisenhardt (2008) who suggest that smaller firms would be very

reluctant to share any intellectual property that they have. Another issue could be how firms may feel that their own desired outcomes of the 'coopetition' differ from one another, which can lead to conflicts throughout the process (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). Despite this a recent report developed by the UK Research and Innovation Council (2018) placed a huge focus on cooperation, not just in a national sense, but internationally.

2.4.2 Networking Group/ Events

As Michaelides, Morton, Michaelides, Lyons & Liu (2013) state an alternative method of reducing the barriers to technology particularly in relation to the levels of knowledge of those within SMEs is developing networking groups to share knowledge regarding the latest technologies and innovations within that industry. This a key recommendation published in a report by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2019): to hold regular networking events for SMEs to allow them to get together and discuss new technologies. The report by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2019) stated that this could be facilitated at events. An event could include a talk delivered by an individual from an organisation who have a vast amount of experience and expertise in that field, followed by a collective networking period.

2.5 Business Events

Events are predominantly categorised into different typologies (Somekh & Lewin, 2008). Typologies can take many different forms for example by size of event (Müller, 2015) or by venue (Hassanien & Crispin, 2011). However, one of the most used methods for classifying the typologies of events was developed by Getz (2008). In this theory Getz (2008) defines the typologies of events by the area that they cover and are split into four main categories: Public Celebration, Business, Sport and Private Events. In later literature Getz and Page (2016) argue that in the ever-expanding professional field of events management the increasing diversity of events can make simpler typologies often more complex.

The business event industry is projected to reach $1,439.3 billion by the end of 2025, according to Sable, Roy & Deshmukh (2019). According to research in the UK Conference and Meeting Survey, there were an estimated 1.29 million conferences and meetings in 2017 (Macdonald, 2018). A study by Foley, Schlenker, Edwards & Lewis-Smith, (2013) highlighted six major themes relating to the benefits that came because of running successful business events: Knowledge expansion, relationship and collaboration, educational outcomes, future research capacity, raising awareness and destination reputation.

From the initial research developed by Getz (2008), Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde (2012), state business events can be categorised by using the acronym MINCE: Meetings, Incentives, Networking, Conferences and Exhibitions.

2.5.1 Meetings, Incentives, Networking, Conferences and Exhibitions (MINCE)

This is a huge industry worldwide with the industry projected to reach $1,439.3 billion by the end of 2025, according to Sable, Roy & Deshmukh (2019). According to research in the UK Conference and Meeting Survey, there were an estimated 1.29 million conferences and meetings in 2017 (Macdonald, 2018).

From the initial research developed by Getz (2008), Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde (2012), business/ corporate events can be categorised by using the acronym MINCE: Meetings, Incentives, Networking events, Conferences and Exhibitions.

Typology	Definition
Meeting	Meetings can be described as more than two people brought together to discuss a pre-determined topic, they can be both informal and formal (Serrat, 2017). Meetings can include a vast range of events such as annual general meetings and team building exercises (Davidson & Cope, 2003). When used within a MINCE context, meetings are predominantly referring to business to business meetings, these can be defined as those which involve two or more organisations meeting to discuss working relationships (Bagire, Byarugaba & Kyogabiirwe, 2015). Business meetings are a crucial part of an organisation being able to achieve its objectives. Denstadli, Julsrud & Hjorthol (2011).
Incentive	Incentive travel (also referred to as incentive events if in a group) is predominantly used as a motivational tool in a workplace to reward and motivate its employees (Rogers, 2013). It is often travel away from work related activities, sometimes to an overseas destination, which recognises workers for increased levels of performance whilst at work (Mair, 2015). Corporate hospitality can also be a part of incentive events, Bennett (2003) states that corporate hospitality is essentially an extension of relationship marketing and if done correctly can provide a base to further deepen relationships with clients, it can be a vital communication tool to target specific customers. However, as Saluja & Mei (2010) suggest, the success of corporate hospitality can be difficult to measure, it is often expensive and is coming under increasing ethical concerns.
Networking	Networking events are those whereby the main objective is to provide networking opportunities for those attending and are used to allow focused discussion on a particular topic (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2012). Networking events/ opportunities can also be added on to an existing meeting/ conference (Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde, 2012). A study by de Klerk (2010) state that a high level of importance that should be placed on networking and the positive impacts it can have. There are several authors who claim that many business events including networking are not a good use of an individual's time and that there are better ways to connect (McKeown, 2015; Coburn, 2016). There are

	several organisations who specialise in hosting networking events for their members such as, BNI, The Yorkshire Mafia and 4Networking (Kirk, 2016).
Conference	Shone and Parry (2010) state that conferences are events that bring together groups of people to exchange ideas which usually focus around academia, business, trade or politics. Conferences can range from small local collective meetings to thousands at major international gatherings (Sousa & Clark, 2017). Typical conferences will allow attendees an opportunity to interact with fellow professionals in that industry (McCarthy, McDonald, Soroczak, Nguyen & Rashid, 2004). Grado, Strauss & Lord (1997) noted that there are four different categories of conference: Business, Academic, Heritage and Special Interest, with the business conference being the most prominent. An example of a large annual conference is the European Association of Labour Economists (EALE) Conference held annually with keynote speakers, academic presentations, networking session and closed discussions (Borghans, Romans & Sauermann, 2010).
Exhibition	Exhibitions or trade shows have been essential sales tools for many centuries as far back as the 1600's (Kirchgeorg, Jung & Klante, 2010). Pollman (2013) describes exhibitions as events that allow companies to present their products and interact with potential customers, whilst also allowing organisations to gather information on rivals. Allen, O'Toole, Harris and McDonnell, (2002) analyse the impact of trade fairs from the 1800's onwards and how they have shaped the current UK events market. As Abou-Shouk, Zoair, Farrag & Hewedi (2017) suggest exhibitions are principally business to consumer orientated and have therefore been used as a marketing tool for organisations throughout the world. Perhaps the most famous example of an exhibition is the annual exposition known as 'Expo'. Held annually it aims to bring together countries and companies from around the world on certain topics, for example the theme for the Expo 2015 Milan was 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life' (Abou-Shouk, Zoair, Farrag & Hewedi, 2017).

Table 1 MINCE Event Definitions

2.6 Benefits of Attending MINCE Events

People attend events for different reasons which can be influenced by both push and pull factors (Richardson and Fluker, 2007). Most studies that analyse event attendance motivations analyse the motivations behind attendance at sporting events (Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2003; Hall & O'Mahony, 2006; Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard, 2009; Roy, Goss & Jubenville, 2010). However, the following will look at the two main factors that are perceived to be the most important relating to the motivation of attending a business event as highlighted by Ivkov et al. (2015).

2.6.1 'Professional Value'

The motivation to attend business events predominantly revolves around the 'customer value' which is defined as the overall assessment by the attendee of the costs versus the benefits of attending an event (Mitchell, Schlegelmilch & Mone, 2016). Mitchell, Schlegelmilch & Mone (2016) state that one of the main motivators for attending business events is the level of 'professional value' that can be

gained. Leek & Christodoulides (2011) suggest that 'professional value' is a benefit gained predominantly through attendance at networking events which can include: gaining new customers, meeting new business partners and forging relationships with new suppliers. It is important to note that this is not limited solely to networking events as previously discussed many business events involve some level of networking. Severt, Wang, Chen & Breiter (2007) expand on the idea of the benefits of networking by stating that at many sector specific business events the networking opportunities are often unique due to the characteristics of the attendees. There are numerous examples of organisations that organise sector specific events across the U.K on a local level. One of the most successful of these is the Made In Group, which has a number of different regional branches that organise events that act as a forum for local manufacturers to meet and discuss issues within the industry (Made In Yorkshire, 2021).

2.6.2 Knowledge Transfer

Another key factor in motivation is the perceived level of knowledge that the attendee will gain from attending the event (Ramirez, Laing and Mair, 2013). A recent study by the Experience Institute (2017) suggests that the main driver behind attendance at business events is education, with 92% of 16,000 participants suggesting that the educational content is vitally important to attendance. As knowledge expansion is one of the key motivators for attending business events as stated by Foley, Schlenker, Edwards & Lewis-Smith, (2013) ensuring a high-level knowledge transfer within that event has a massive role to play within the levels of motivation that an individual has (Argote, 2013).

It is worth noting however that Getz (2007) suggests that motivations are not always simple as the individual's passion for work and desire to increase their personal knowledge base, in fact often attendees go to business events as it is a part of their job description.

2.7 Impact of Covid-19 on MINCE Industry

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive impact across the world. Many countries across the globe have been under lockdown for a large amount of time and this has had a massive impact on the global economy (BBC, 2020). The outbreak has sent huge shockwaves through the events industry, particularly in the UK where a Government enforced lockdown has result in a ban on mass gatherings for the foreseeable future. Due to this, all-major events in the UK have either been postponed (and re-arranged) or cancelled (BBC, 2020). It is important to note that as this pandemic is still ongoing, information on how the industry will be able to operate post-crisis is not clear.

2.7.1 Usage of Digital Technology

One of the most universally agreed changes that will take place in the events industry post crisis is the further adaption of digital technologies in event planning (Lewin, 2020; Ludvigsen, 2020; Powell,

2020). The impact that the utilisation of new digital technology has had is one of the biggest changes to the MINCE industry over the last number of years, according to Green (2018). One of the most common trends in the business events sector found in the annual Eventbrite Pulse Report (2019) is the increased usage by organisations of virtual meetings and conferences. This is something which the impact of Covid-19 has only increased further, with several Event Industry Professional Bodies highlighting the future importance that technology must play in the industry post crisis (McCorkell, 2020). As far back as 2008, Chee Khoon & Rahmaiah (2008) highlighted the ever-increasing importance of online technology use within events, through their research into the increasing numbers of online exhibitions. Research by Sa, Miguel Ferreira & Sepa, (2019) further highlighted how the rate of change towards virtual events had increased in the following years, even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are several ways that technology is being adopted. Firstly, virtual meetings are becoming more popular. These are meetings where attendees can be spread across different physical locations and time zones but are virtually located in a commonplace (Saatchi, 2016). Virtual Meetings are no longer simply viewing a presentation or hosting a video call, further developments provide a more interactive experience, for example the ability to download and transfer files (Ly Khim, 2018). The rise in popularity also means that there are several platforms that virtual meetings can be run from (Gottfried, Delancey, Watwood & Hardin, 2015). Since the outbreak began, one of the biggest virtual meeting platforms 'Zoom' has experienced a five hundred percent increase in the number of lunchtime meetings (Reilly, 2020). However, this sudden increased usage of applications such as Zoom and Facebook Messenger Rooms has also revealed potential weaknesses in the software, which could leave attendees suspectable to cyber-attacks (Sabbagh 2020). Prior to the outbreak the use of digital technologies was slowly becoming a key part of event management. Many Event Managers were utilising a hybrid strategy in event management (Ivkov et al., 2015). Saatchi (2016) also states that there is a growing interest in the use of virtual meetings to support corporate training. Table 2 below shows some of the benefits and drawbacks of the utilisation of digital technologies.

Benefits	Drawbacks
• It can allow individuals to attend who otherwise would not be able to (Green, 2018).	• Lack of personalisation can be detrimental for the attendees (Kerravala, 2015). Fenich, Scott-Halsell, Ogbeide & Hashimoto (2014) state is now massively important for the millennial generation.
• Reduced travel time for attendees and reduced travel costs (White, 2014).	• Technology can often be unreliable (Citon, 2015).
• Less detrimental impact on the environment (White, 2014).	• Untested technology can often leave attendees exposed to cyber-attacks (Citon, 2015).

Table 2 Virtual Meeting Analysis

The debate as to whether the increased use of digital technologies will be sustained post-crisis is not clear, as Lewin (2020) states some organisations were already planning on taking their events online only prior to the outbreak, whereas other organisations do not feel they are able to replicate the face-to-face experience.

As the crisis is ongoing much of the understanding around the long-term impact is related to the opinions of individuals as opposed to academic research. Ivkov et al., (2015) state there is little research into understanding the impact that online events have on the motivations of individuals to attend.

2.7.2 Impact on Jobs

Globally the events industry is worth over one trillion dollars and the cancellation of numerous events has massively impacted the industry (Hancock, 2020). With very few events still taking place, Kelly (2020) suggests that this will result in scathing job cuts for those working in the events industry. Similarly, Kelly (2020) predicts that this will have a ripple effect to those organisations which support the industry. Events also have a massive impact on the regions that they are hosted in and the loss of income can be hugely detrimental to the area (Davidson & Rogers, 2006). For example, the cancellation of the Hay Festival has led to an estimated loss of twenty-eight million pounds to the local economy (Heard, 2020).

However, as previously mentioned there are organisations that are seeing an increase in business. New start-up event platform organisations such as Hopin and Run the World have seen massive increases in user numbers and are now hosting major online conferences (Browne, 2020).

2.8 Event Planning

As discussed, events can have an important role in achieving the strategic goals of the organisation, for this reason Getz (2007) suggests that it is vital that events are planned and managed effectively to maximise their effectiveness. This is a view shared by Crowther (2010) who suggests that the success of an event/ series of events, hinges on the professional ability of the organisation to manage and plan them. With this is mind, this section will explore several different frameworks that have been produced to assist in the event planning process. This is vital as research by Smith (2017) suggests that although there are several models, often they are untested and evidence of the success or failure of these frameworks is unknown.

2.8.1 Event Planning Models

Crowther (2010) suggests that there are several useful models for event planning, amongst them are those developed by Getz (2005) and Goldblatt (2005). Getz' Model of Event Planning (2005) focuses predominantly on larger events, with the initial focus of the process being on the 'intent to bid' something which is traditionally associated with large scale events. Shone & Parry (2010) suggest this model is impractical to use for smaller scale events as it is too complex. The Goldblatt Five Phases of Event Management Model (2005) proposes a cyclical focus on the planning process highlighting key areas of event planning that need to be covered to create a successful event. Crowther (2010) suggests that this model is unsuitable for smaller events as it is built for larger scale events.

The Event Planning Process initially developed by Watt (1998) shows a seven-step process from initial concept development through to highlighting future practices that maybe adopted for future events. Watt (1998) suggests that this is useful as a planning tool as it could be used for many different types of events from large global events such as the Olympic Games to a small local event such as a Village Fete. A more contemporary model is the Four Phases of Event Planning Model by Mallen & Adams (2017). In this cyclical model the importance of the event manager is highlighted throughout from development to evaluation. This model has been highlighted in this literature review as it adopts modern trends on top of the core principles of event organising such as the incorporation of aligning the event with a social responsibility policy that the organisation has in place (Carroll, 2008).

2.8.2 Planning Process for Events (Shone and Parry, 2013)

The final event planning process that this section will examine is the Planning Process for Events by Shone and Parry (2013). Developed from the initial model from 2010, this process looks at the five event management activities Shone and Parry (2013) claim need to be undertaken to create a

successful event. The model has been developed so that it can be used not only by experienced event professionals but also by relative novices. As shown in Figure 2 below the process relies heavily on the initial stages of development and does not place as much focus on the actual event itself.
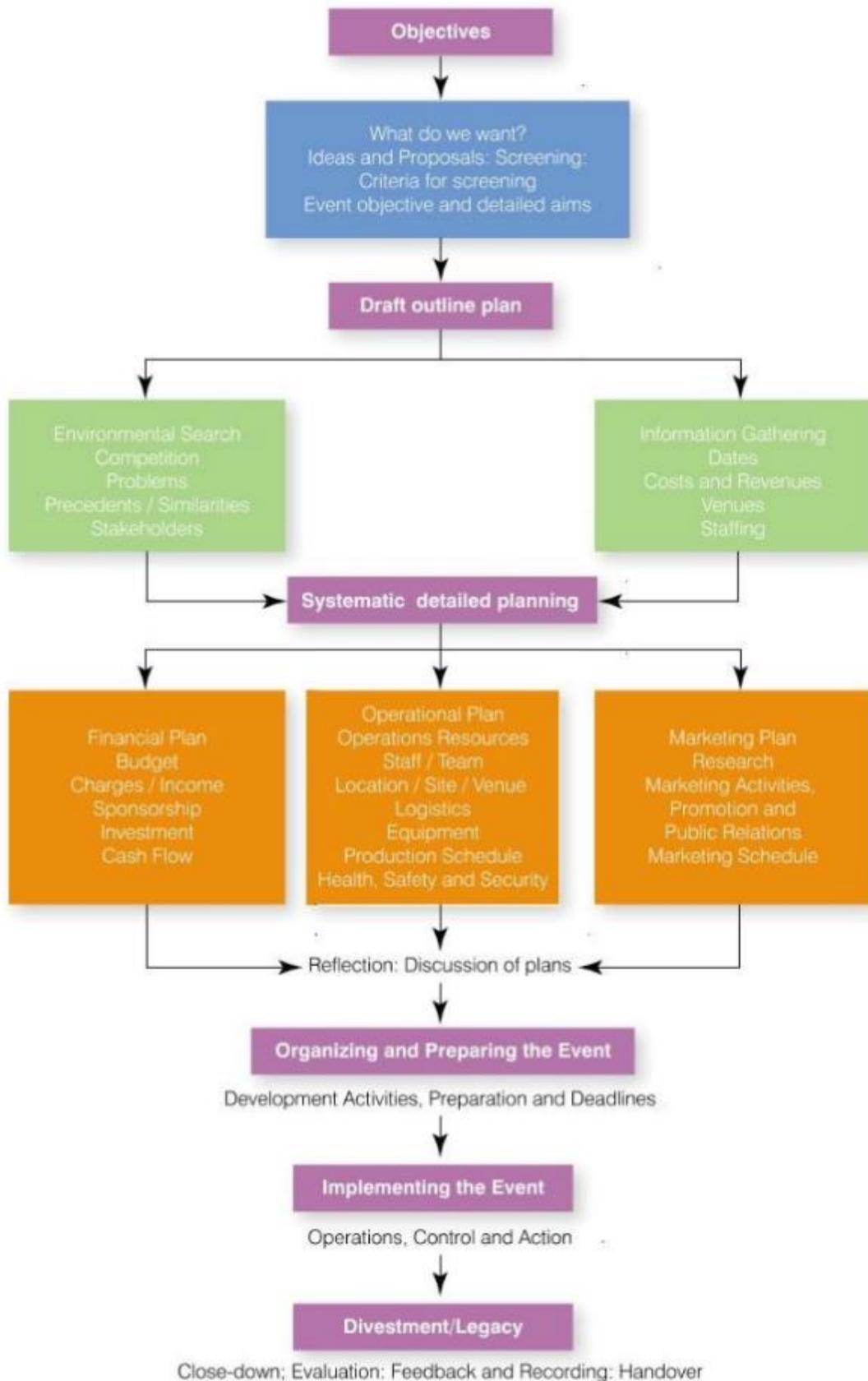
Figure 2 Planning Process for Events (Shone & Parry, 2013)

The first stage of this process is deciding on the objectives of the event and what it will try to achieve, starting from screening initial ideas through to the setting the events objectives and detailed aims. This is a crucial stage in the event planning process, as Raj, Walters & Rashid (2013) suggest, a clear set of objectives and aims can help the overall strategic direction of the event. As frequently discussed in a range of business scenarios all targets should be set as SMART targets: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound (Macleod, 2013). Although initially set early on during this process, aims can be developed throughout to adapt to any changes that may occur (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2012).

The second phase of this process looks at the overall planning of the event and is split into two sections: the initial draft outline plan and systematic detailed planning. As part of the draft outline plan there are two major tasks that need to be undertaken, both an environmental search and general information gathering. The environmental search looks at not only competition that may be operating similar events, but also at the successes/ failings with other similar events. This is important as Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond & McMahon-Beattie (2011) suggest analysis of competitors can highlight key areas for improvement as well as provide a foundation for the event to be based on. Information gathering is a more internally focused plan looking at areas the event organiser can influence such as potential dates and potential venues. To complete both tasks simultaneously Shone and Parry (2013) have utilised a seven-step process adapted from research by Costa and Teare (1996).

The next stage of the planning phase is the systematic detailed plan, which is split into three sections: finance, operations and marketing. Finance not only includes setting a budget for the event but also looks at any inward investment and if there will be sufficient cash flow available throughout the event process. As Masterman (2008) suggests the financial control is clearly of huge importance to the success of the event, but it is even more critical in the initial planning of the event to help understand if there are any financial obstacles and if there are any major revenue sources that can be found. The operations aspect of the plan or logistics requires an examination of whether the proposed event has sufficient resources to go ahead, particularly in terms of the people that will be required operationally to make the event a success. Quinn (2013) states that suitable resources must be an integral part of the initial plan as, if extra resources are needed, such as staffing, then this can take a substantial amount of time. Although all elements to this plan are vital, perhaps the most important is the marketing plan that is developed. As increasing technology has led to a greater opportunity in events marketing it is vital that at this stage many marketing channels are explored (Damm, 2012). Several tools can be used to define what is needed within marketing for events. Reic (2017) uses an Integrated Marketing Communications framework to clearly define how the message

will get through to the intended attendee. As would be expected after this stage has been completed it will be reflected upon by the event committee.

In the next two steps of the process developed by Shone & Parry (2013) both Preparation and Implementation, these appear not to be as poignant as the work and plans have been set in the initial plan. This is not to say that the pre-preparation and running of the event are not important, as reaction and response are vital to a success on the day of the event (Tum, Norton & Nevan Wright, 2006). Shone & Parry (2013) utilise a Gantt chart to plan out the operational tasks required pre, during and post event. This is a tool which O'Toole (2011) suggests is of vital importance to any event manager.

The final stage of the process is Legacy, which aims to look at three main tasks: the physical close of the event, the administrative duties involved and most importantly evaluation of the whole event process. As Hardavella, Aamli-Gaagnat, Saad, Rousalova & Sreter (2017) state collecting and acting upon feedback in any industry is a difficult task, but it is a massively valuable tool for indicating how and where to improve, as well as noting current strengths. Schwarz, Westerbeek, Liu, Emery & Turner (2017) point out the value of using effective feedback strategies in events by stating that detailed feedback for re-occurring events such as the Olympics has over time reduced the impact of some negative effects such as disastrous post-event legacies.

One potential issue that arises through nearly all the processes is that the areas that they are often broken down into, will once again need to be broken down individually and analysed, i.e. a framework within a framework. Another issue that occurs within a number of these frameworks is that they are predominantly focused and built around the organisation of larger events.

2.9 Literature Review Summary

As discussed, this Literature Review was split into two main sections. Firstly, technology adoption within SMEs was analysed. To provide a background to this section, the benefits of technology adoption and how this applied to SMEs was discussed. The next section looked at the barriers to technology that SMEs face using the SBTAM model developed by Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky (2012). Following on from this, two predominant barriers to technology adoption were highlighted. These were high costs (in both purchasing and maintenance) and knowledge gaps. Finally, in this part of the Literature Review potential methods to overcome these barriers to technology adoption were discussed. These included: coopetition theory and networking groups/events.

The second part of this Literature Review discussed the business events sector, in order to provide a background to the sector, the acronym MINCE (Meetings, Incentives, Networking, Conference and

Exhibitions) was used to explain the typologies of business events. The analysis then focused on the two main benefits that individuals gain when attending business events which are the professional value (which can include increasing contacts and trading with new suppliers) and knowledge transfer. The impact that the current Covid-19 outbreak may have on the MINCE sector was then discussed focusing on the two most described areas that it may impact: use of digital technology and impact on employment in the industry. The final section of the Literature Review offered an analysis of the frameworks that are available to an Event Manager when organising an event. The most in-depth analysis that was provided here was based on the Planning Process for Events developed by Shone & Parry (2013).

3.0 Methodology

A research methodology is a guide that shows how the research will be undertaken (Mishra & Alok, 2017). Bryman (2015) suggests that for a research project to be a success it relies heavily on the strength of the research methods used. It is important to understand that throughout the development of this methodology each stage was chosen with the aim of answering the research question, through an exploration of the research objectives:

Develop an understanding of the characteristics commonly associated with Small and Medium Enterprises and how these can act as barriers to technology adoption.

Assess the key elements that a Small and Medium Enterprise would like to gain from attending an event.

Develop an insight into the organisation involved in a successful event for Small and Medium Enterprises.

This methodology developed focuses primarily on the collection of data in relation to research objectives 2 & 3. Research objective 1 was predominantly addressed through the data collected for the literature review process.

The Research Onion by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2019) is a model that highlights the stages involved in the development of research, this is shown in Figure 3. The purpose of this framework is to provide the researcher with a clear framework upon which to develop a concise research strategy. The term onion refers to the fact that each 'separate layer' can be 'peeled' to provide a useful research methodology (Al Zefeiti & Azmi Mohamad, 2015). As suggested by Raithatha (2017), the primary benefit of using this model is that it provides a solid basis to develop a justifiable research strategy through its step-by-step method and as a result it is used frequently within research in social sciences. One criticism of this model as suggested by Melinikovas (2018) is because of the rigidity of the structure it can be viewed as inflexible and cannot be adapted easily into other topics which it was not designed for. An alternate model is the multi-dimensional research pyramid developed by Tomlin and Borgetto (2011) however, due to its complex nature and lack of application for this study it was not chosen.
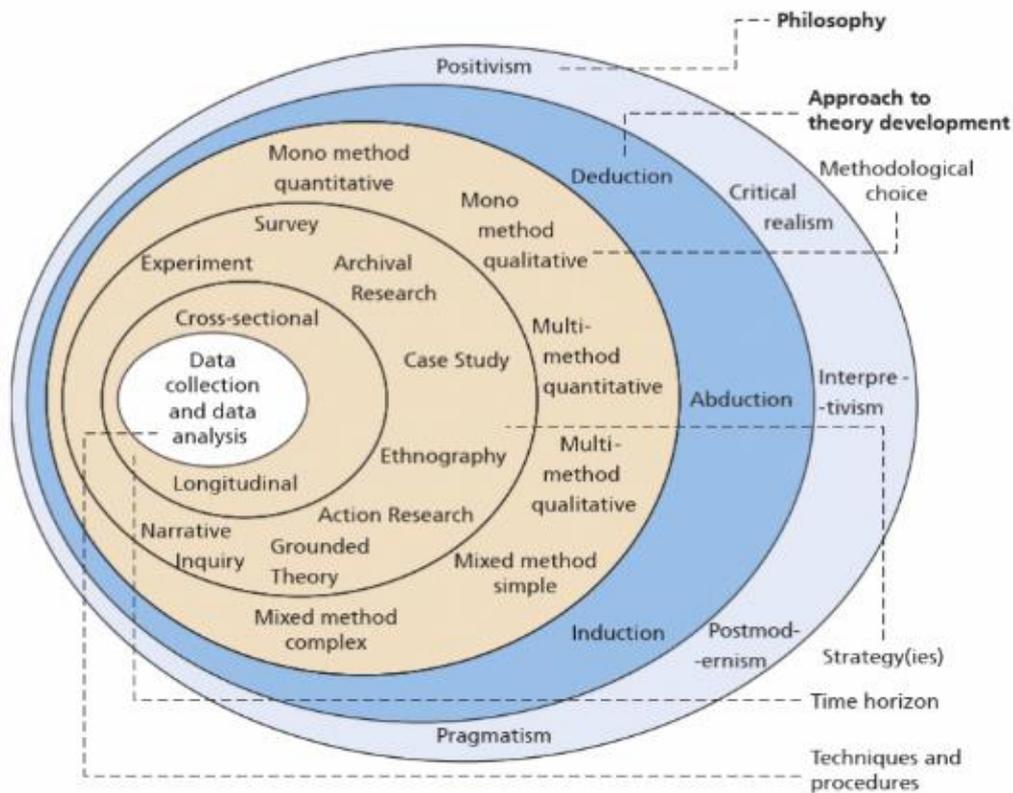
Figure 3 Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019)

3.1 Research Philosophy

The outermost layer of the research onion involves the philosophy of the researcher which holds a huge significance when planning and carrying out research as the understanding of philosophy allows the researcher to choose the correct forward plan (Scully, 2016).

3.1.1 Philosophical Paradigms

The philosophical stage of the research onion focuses on the philosophical paradigms that can be adopted to base research upon. Quite simply as Sobh & Perry (2006) state a research paradigm is the belief system that guides the researcher, Sobh & Parry (2006) also suggest that there are four different paradigms: positivism, realism, constructivism and critical theory. However, with the utilisation of the research onion, there are five stances suggested when developing a methodology, Table 3 below contains the definitions of each stance.

Stance	Definition
Positivism	A term used to describe an approach to research that relies solely on the evidence of science e.g., experiments and statistics (Crotty, 1998).
Critical Realism	Although linked closely with positivism, realism believes that scientific methods are not perfect, all theory can be revised and the researcher should lookout for several methods of new research (Newman, 2010).
Interpretivism	Interpretivism involves the understanding of feelings or behaviours which cannot be gained through numerical analysis, instead it is a detailed analysis of words, actions and behaviours (Ryan, 2018).
Postmodernism	This stance emerged in the late twentieth century and is very similar to interpretivism, however postmodernism is more likely to look further at the role of language within behaviours (Chia, 2003).
Pragmatism	Pragmatism aims to link both theory and practice, suggesting that both constructivism and objectivism can be used together as a method in a research approach (May, 2011).

Table 3 Philosophical Stance Definitions

For the purposes of this research a pragmatic stance was adopted, the flexibility that this focus offers allows the link between theory and practice, by allowing the researcher to take both an objectivist and constructivist stance in equal measure, in practical terms this allows for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2003). Objectivism is the philosophy that values and knowledge are objective and decided by the nature of reality, they are not created by the thoughts of an individual (Hamati-Ataya, 2014). An alternative view to objectivism, constructivism believes that social phenomenon is developed by the individual(s) who it has an impact upon (Oyegoke, 2011).

3.2 Research Approach

During this phase of the research onion there are three main approaches to theory development: deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning and abductive reasoning (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). In simple terms, utilising a deductive approach involves the verification or falsification of an existing theory/ theories, in this approach any data (which is predominantly but not limited to quantitative) that is collected, is related to an existing theory (Meredith, 1993). Conversely an inductive approach is concerned with theory generation and development; utilising a more flexible structure to the development of a methodology means it is more likely to analyse qualitative data collection to gather thoughts and opinions on a specific issue with the outcomes of the data collection likely to lead to the development of a new theory (Jebreen, 2012). As suggested by

Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) deduction involves working from the top to bottom whereas induction involves working from the bottom upwards. The third option abduction involves a combination of both induction and deduction, it is suggested by Saunders Lewis & Thornhill (2019) this is the utilisation of existing theory in the development of a new theory or adjustments to an existing theory. As Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) suggest this is the most common approach that many business/ management researchers take.

In this research an abductive approach has been taken as the initial concept of the thesis was developed upon a long-standing problem that had been recognised by the researcher and a potential solution. This research cannot be classed as induction as the framework utilised is only used to support the research that is taking place and is not being specifically tested, instead it is used to address a problem.

3.3 Research Choice

The next section of the research onion involves the researcher considering the methodological choice that they make, either quantitative or qualitative research. Once a decision has been made on the approach, a mono or multi method approach can be used, Bryman (2006) suggests that a multi method approach is best suited to business focused research.

3.3.1 Quantitative Approach

A quantitative study is one which collects data in numerical form, is usually linked to a scientific and systematic approach and is often used to prove/ disprove a theory (Kothari, 2004). The most used method used within quantitative research is experiments, as they are primarily used to measure and provide statistics (Apuke, 2017). However, as de Vaus (2014) argues, questionnaires can also produce quantitative results, for example closed questions and rating scales can produce figures. There are several benefits to adopting a quantitative approach to research as Antonious (2002) suggests analysis is often simpler to undertake and quicker due to the ever-expanding list of software that is available. Denscombe (2014) also suggests that as the values within the data are numerical and can be measured, it is less likely to be shrouded in the difficulties of interpretation, should any other researcher wish to replicate the experiment. However, as to be expected there are several limitations of using quantitative methods, Damaskinidis (2017) claims that the snapshot analysis this method offers can often lack depth and robustness when attempting to explain complex issues.

3.3.2 Qualitative Approach

The alternative to quantitative research is qualitative, which can have multiple different definitions, which have long been argued by academics (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). A generally understood and accepted definition is that qualitative research is primarily exploratory research that involves the collection of non-numerical data (Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007). Some of the most common methods of qualitative data collection include focus groups, individual interviews and observations (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Rahman (2017) states that the main advantage of using this strategy is that the data can have a far superior level of depth to it due to the additional analysis of emotions and responses. However, the main limitation is that analysis can take far longer, due to the potential complexities in developing a competent analysis framework, which is also a difficulty within itself (Silverman, 2016).

3.3.3 Mixed Methods

Utilising both quantitative and qualitative data techniques in the same research project is commonly referred to as using mixed methods, as Hafsa (2019) suggests it is the third methodological movement. It is important to understand as Creswell & Plano Clark (2011) suggest that a mixed method strategy does not have to place equal emphasis on quantitative and qualitative methods as one approach can take precedence over another. Whitehead & Schneider (2013) suggest that through acknowledging that both approaches can be interrelated this can allow for the collection of more complete and meaningful data. Whitehead & Schneider (2013) also argue that this method provides the researcher with a greater level of resources to carry out the research. However, as Miller & Fredericks (2006) suggest this method is highly time consuming and complex as the researcher will need to have a good understanding of both methods to implement them correctly. For the purposes of this research a mixed methods approach was used as part of the data collection. This was to collect the thoughts and opinions of those who organise events to develop a framework and to also collect quantifiable data from those who attend events, to provide a greater understanding of the wants and needs of the consumer.

As Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) suggest there are two ways in which mixed methods can be defined: either as concurrent, which involves both methods being adopted at the same time or sequential, which involves more than one phase. In a two-phase research design, there are two strategies, either exploratory (qualitative then quantitative) or explanatory (quantitative then qualitative) (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The utilisation of a two-phase process, although more time consuming than a concurrent method can allow for a greater data set as the data is more likely to have a more concurrent relationship (Greene, 2008). This research has taken the approach

of a sequential exploratory method, the results and feedback from the first stage of data collection were adopted and utilised in the development of the second stage of the process.

3.4 Research Strategy

In the next layer of the research onion is the research strategy, which can be defined as a plan of how the research question will be answered. As Denzin & Lincoln (2017) state it is the link between philosophy and choice of method. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) say that although no one method is inferior to another, it must be at least partially coherent to the rest of the methodology, the seven strategies that they define as part of the research onion are described in Table 4 below.

Strategy	**Definition**
Experiment	Experiments are scientific in their structure; they test the probability of change in an independent variable causing change in a dependent variable and produce data that can be analysed statistically (Ross & Morrison, 2004).
Survey	Most associated with a deductive approach, it is a strategy which allows the researcher to collect large quantities of data on any topic in an economical way, the most common survey strategy is through questionnaires (Ponto, 2015).
Archival Research	Archival research involves the study of documents from different sources e.g., annual reports, memos, etc (Ventresca & Mohr, 2002). Although the ease of online accessibility has helped this strategy massively, this can often be difficult as Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) suggest that it is difficult to estimate the amount of relevant data that is available.
Case Study	A case study is an in-depth inquiry into a specific topic within a real-life environment, it can refer to amongst other things; a person, group or an event (Hartley, 2004).
Ethnography	Ethnography is used to analyse the culture or social world of a group; the term ethnography describes a written account of people or ethnic group (Taber, 2010).
Action Research	Action research initially involves the creation of an objective usually linked to an issue or problem within an organisation to help develop and implement a solution, this is a cyclical process which once initially completed helps the researcher to reflect and further develop solutions (Johnson, 2012).
Grounded Theory	This method uses data collected from observation to generate a theory/ prediction(s) and then puts these to the test (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).
Narrative Inquiry	A newer strand of strategy, narrative inquiry is a study based around the experience of the participants and researcher in a specific order, akin to storytelling (Conle, 2000).

Table 4 Research Onion Research Strategies

This research follows an action research strategy, the nature of the study aligns with the strategy perfectly in that, according to Tripp (2005), action research is often used to attempt to address a specific problem (in this instance the low levels of technology adoption within SMEs) within a certain situation. Should the issue or problem be resolved or partially resolved the research outcomes will hopefully lead to practical information and ideas for the organisation. Action research also allows the research to utilise different forms of knowledge to create a well-developed solution that has taken in multiple views on the topic (Tripp, 2005). In this instance, there was data collected from three different sources: SMEs, Event Organisers and existing literature.

There can be some difficulties attached with the selection of a research strategy as Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) suggest confusion around the labels attached to the strategies more associated with qualitative research can often lead to the researcher overlapping strategies. This research may not be considered a 'textbook' example of action research as after collecting the data and analysing the event framework, the desired event series did not take place. However, this could take place as part of further research and the action research cycle would continue.

3.5 Research Time Horizon

One of the later stages of the research onion involves the length of time that will be taken to undertake the research. This section is divided into cross-sectional and longitudinal (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Cross-sectional studies involve undertaking a snapshot of data collection at a point in time; the main benefit of this strategy being that the research can be performed quicker (Seita, 2016). A longitudinal study is an observational study that uses continuous measure to follow specific individuals over a period. The advantage of utilising this would be that the research can study development and change (Caruana, Roman, Hernandez-Sanchez & Solli, 2015).

This research is a cross-sectional study as it analyses a current key issue in technology adoption within SMEs and then provides a potential solution. A longitudinal study is unrealistic for this research due to the time-constraints of the research.

3.6 Data Collection – Initial Method

The core of the research onion looks at how the data will be collected and following on from this how it will be analysed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). As discussed, this research uses a mixed methods approach; in this initial section, the first stage of the sequential process the qualitative data collection method is discussed. The key aim of this stage was to provide data that can be primarily used in relation to research objective 3 and assist in the development of the next phase of the research.

3.6.1 Qualitative Data Techniques

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) there are two primary methods of qualitative data collection interviews and observation. Quite simply an interview in a research context is described as a data acquiring technique which involves verbal communication between the researcher and the subject (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2001). Interviews can be with a focus group or with an individual; one of the main benefits of utilising individual interviews is that it allows the researcher to gain a far greater understanding of an issue or topic with a key figure in that field (Jamshed, 2014). However, it is important to understand that utilising interviews as a method can be difficult; a poorly designed interview or poor interviewer may detrimentally influence the research findings (Mathes, Fox & Hunn, 2001).

Observation is understood to be description of events and behaviours in a specific setting (Kawulich, 2005). Observation has not been traditionally utilised as a technique within business and management studies but with technological advancements it has come to be utilised much more, particularly in areas such as market research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The complexities of collecting and analysing this type of data as suggested by Baker (2006) mean that this can be a time consuming and complex process. In the case of this research, the very nature of observation means that this is of little use, as the aim and objectives are unrelated to the analysis of behaviours and interactions of individuals.

For this section of the data collection, interviews were chosen as they allowed a deep insight into the thoughts of the individuals who are influential in the events industry. They also ensured that a large quantity of data could be collected in a short space of time, which a long-term observation would not have.

3.6.2 Interview Typologies

One of the most common methods of differentiating interviews within research is to classify them as either structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Structured involves a predetermined set of questions asked in the exact same manner each time, they usually have pre-determined answers attached to them (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006). Semi-structured interviews usually start with a pre-determined list of themes and key questions to help guide the interview but the extent to which these are used will depend on the philosophy of the interviewer and the responses from the interviewee (Rabionet, 2011). Unstructured interviews are where questions are not prearranged, instead it is more of an open conversation with an underlying theme, as a result the interviewer can adapt and change questions based fully on the answers of the interviewee (Dana & Dawes, 2013).

The interviews taking place as part of this research were structured and a list of interview questions was sent across to each participant upon acceptance of the interview and they were also given an additional copy prior to the interview taking place. This ensured that the data collected was on topics and themes that the researcher required, as Denzin & Lincoln (2017) state it is very easy to for an interviewer to lose focus during an interview which can result in a lack of quality data. De Vaus (2014) argues that this method should therefore be described as a researcher completed questionnaire. However, it is the addition of some questions during the interview that separates this. Although these interviews were structured, they used open ended questions and did not give the interviewee a selection of answers to choose from as a traditional structured interview may have. The primary reason for this was to allow the interviewees to go into detail in each question with regards to their specialism. Not all interviewees had the same events-based background, so naturally any pre-determined responses were not be suitable.

Another issue that the researcher needs to address is whether the interviews will be conducted in a group or individually (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Although more time consuming, using individual interviews will produce data that is less influenced by the other individuals in the sample (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). However, the main issue with utilising individual interviews is that these can be time consuming (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Group interviews can be either structured or un-structured; one of the most common examples of a group interview is a focus group (Frey & Fontana, 1991). The main benefit of using this strategy is data can be collected from multiple sources in a short space of time (Frey & Fontana, 1991).

For the purposes of this research, although more time consuming, the individual interview technique was used. This was primarily to avoid any responses being influenced by other individuals within that group. Also, as the interviews were conducted face to face, it would have been almost impossible to get participants from across the north of England to meet in a specific place at a specific time.

3.6.3 Interview Methods

The next consideration involves how the interviews will take place. There are two common options available to the researcher, either face-to-face or telephone/ internet based (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). A face-to-face interview is precisely as it suggests, the meeting of the interviewer and interviewee face to face; the main benefit of this as suggested by Neuman (2012) is the interviewer can develop a more personalised relationship with the interviewee, which can lead to a much more positive response and greater data set. However, as Oltman (2016) states the primary drawback of using this method is that it will be far more time consuming for the researcher to travel to each location and undertake the interview. As discussed, the other commonly used method is

telephone interviews. The development of technology has led to the addition of internet-based interviews under this same umbrella (Novick, 2008). As one would expect the benefits and drawbacks of using the method are the opposite to that of a face-to-face interview, in addition to this Novick (2008) suggests that the lack of contextual and non-verbal data that telephone/ internet-based interviews have makes them of less use in the collection of qualitative data.

The interviews that took place were face-to-face interviews, apart from one which had a scheduling issue that led to a telephone interview being conducted, although more time consuming, this method led to the collection of a richer data set. An issue that was considered by the researcher was the potential detrimental impact on the environment from travel across the north of England, however this was reduced through the utilisation of public transport where it was possible.

3.6.4 Interview Data Collection

The next phase of the development of the interviews, involved discussing how the research objectives will be met through this phase of the data collection. This is primarily in relation to research objective 2 & 3.

Assess the key elements that a Small and Medium Enterprise would like to gain from attending an event.

Although this objective may be more related to the second phase of data collection, the interviews allowed an insight into what the event organiser feels an SME wants to take away from an event and how (if at all) they modify their events to accommodate this.

Develop an insight into the organisation involved in a successful event for Small and Medium Enterprises.

Through utilising the Shone and Parry Planning Process for Events (2013) this provided the researcher with a platform to ask the interviewees about their methods and processes for developing a successful event. The answers they provided were descriptive of how they organise their events and provided an insight into what makes them successful. At the same time, questions in this interview allowed the interviewee to express what they believed to mean by success, as different individuals working for different organisations have different measures of success.

3.6.5 Interview Questions

Perhaps the most important stage of the interview creation stage was the development of the questions that were going to be asked. Asking the right questions can massively impact research quality, as Bolderston (2012) states if the questions are not designed with the information that the researcher is aiming to collect at the forefront then it will be more than likely a wasted exercise.

As Bolderston (2012) suggests producing questions in relation to academic research interview questions should be based upon an academic theory. The Shone and Parry Planning Process for Events (2013) was chosen as the main structure upon which to base the interview questions. This framework was chosen as it places a strong emphasis on both the objective development and the planning phases, two key areas the research was looking to explore. One drawback of using this method was that it placed less importance on the final three stages, there could have been key information that was not obtained from the interviews, something which the interviewees may see as vital to event success. There were multiple elements within the framework that were not adapted into questions for the purposes of this research: public relations, security and investment. This was because the researcher considered that these elements were not as relevant to the organisation of events aimed at SMEs.

It is also important to add that researcher experience/ curiosity played a part in the selection of questions, as this is action research taking place within an organisation it is only to be expected that the researcher would use their own experience to develop questions to solve potential problems they have encountered. There were multiple areas where questions could have been developed within this framework however, they were left out due to the perceived lack of relevance to the research.

3.6.6 Interview Analysis

As Sutton & Austin (2015) suggest, data analysis is key in the development of the research paper, it is the stage upon which data collected can be measured against existing theories and hypothesis. The methods used to analyse data is dependent on the type of research collected either quantitative, qualitative or both, in this instance both. Once the data from the interview was collected, the researcher then self-transcribed all the interviews, although this took slightly more time, it was far more cost effective and lead to the researcher having an increased level of familiarisation with the data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

For the interview phase there were several qualitative data analysis methods that could have been used, for the purposes of this research a thematic analysis approach was adopted, as it is one of the most common methods of analysis for interviews (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017)

As Nowell, Norris, White & Moules (2017) state, thematic analysis attempts to identify patterns of themes within interview data. There are as Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest multiple benefits to utilising thematic analysis, mainly that it can be easily grasped and can be quick to learn. Braun & Clarke (2006) also state the flexibility of thematic analysis allows it to adapt to the requirements of the researcher. King (2004) also notes that thematic analysis forces the researcher to take a highly

structured analysis of the data which will aid in producing a clear and concise final report. However, the flexibility of this approach for an inexperienced researcher can lead to a lack of consistency and cohesion which can lead to wasteful data analysis (Holloway & Todres, 2003). This is an opinion endorsed by Thorne (2000) who states that thematic analysis is an extremely complex process.

The data from the interview was analysed by thematic analysis, this was because of the flexibility of the technique which could be used to answer the research objectives, in a clear and concise manner. The thematic analysis followed a six-step process developed by Braun & Clarke (2006) shown in Table 5 below:

Stage	Phase	Description
1	Familiarisation	Transcribing the data, reading multiple times and noting down initial ideas throughout the transcribing process.
2	Initial Coding	Assigning initial codes to the data, a code in this instance is a brief description of what is said.
3	Theme Search	A search for broader themes after the initial coding which will highlight interesting wider points within the data.
4	Theme Review	A review of the themes developed in section three will take place here to develop a set of themes that are coherent and distinctive.
5	Theme Definition	In this stage the themes identified will be named and described not only by its definition but also what is interesting about the theme.
6	Report Production	At this stage, the results will then be turned into a report, in a clear and concise format.

Table 5 Six-stage Thematic Analysis Process (Braun & Clarke 2006)

3.6.7 Interview Summary

It is important to highlight the impact that this phase of the data collection will have in relation to the research objectives, particularly a deep level of understanding with relation to research objective 3. The importance of this data highlights why elements of the data collection which were more time consuming such as using individual interviews and selecting to use face-to-face interviews were chosen to provide an enriched data set. As this methodology followed a sequential exploratory method of data collection, the data collected at this stage had an impact on the design of the next stage.

3.7 Data Collection – Secondary Method

As discussed, this research used a sequential exploratory method of data collection, the second phase focused on a method of primarily quantitative data collection, the development of which was influenced by the findings of the initial phase of data collection. The key focus of the secondary method was to collect data in relation to research objective 2.

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection

One of the most common methods of collecting quantitative data as Roopa & Satya (2012) suggest is a questionnaire, which is a series of questions asked to a sample of individuals to obtain useful data regarding a topic. The main benefit of using questionnaires is that it allows the researcher to gather the opinions of many individuals in a relatively shorter length of time than other methods (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2007). Despite the wide-ranging benefits that the use of questionnaires can generate it is also important to understand the limitations that using this method can have, as Cameron & Price (2009) suggest a poorly designed questionnaire can lead to misleading information or even no information at all. Indeed, as Bell & Waters (2014) suggest the difficulty in designing a good quality questionnaire should not be underestimated at all.

For the purposes of this research a questionnaire was chosen as it provided data from many individuals in a short amount of time, which was needed to collect data with a significant level of credibility into the previously developed framework. As Mathers, Fox & Hunn (2007) state the main benefit of the collection of quantitative data through questionnaires is that this can be vital to help either reaffirm or contradict a previously collected opinion.

3.7.2 Questionnaire Modes

In the design of the questionnaire the initial consideration is that of how the questionnaire will be completed, there are two ways in which this can be done, self-completed or researcher completed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Researcher completed is a similar technique to a structured interview whereby the answers are recorded by the researcher from pre-set questions which are not deviated from (De Vaus, 2014). Researcher completed questionnaires can be beneficial as these can often provide a greater level of data due to the level of increased level of interaction between the researcher and the respondent (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2007). However, as Mathers, Fox & Hunn, (2007) also suggest these can often be very time consuming to undertake as multiple responses cannot be taken at once and they can only be collected when the researcher is active. Self-completed questionnaires are commonly referred to as surveys, these are the most common method of questionnaire, in this process the respondent will complete and then return to the researcher (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). For the purposes of this research a self-completed

survey was chosen due to time constraints. Using a self-completed survey means that the results are less likely to show interviewer bias as the respondent was not influenced by the researcher during the completion of the questionnaire.

3.7.3 Self-Completed Questionnaires

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) suggest that there are four main strands of distribution for self-completed questionnaires: internet, SMS, postal and delivery and collection. Internet questionnaires are then split into web based and mobile based. Although essentially the same method Kozinets (2015) suggests that is still important to highlight a distinction between the two. This is a further development from Ponto, Ellington, Mellon & Beck (2010) who had previously stated the were two prominent methods of questionnaire distribution, namely delivery & collection and internet. Table 6 below highlights the key benefits and drawbacks (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Self-Completed Questionnaires		
Method	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
Internet	• Easily distributed. • Software can be used to analyse responses easily.	• Software can often be expensive to use. • Response rate can often be low.
SMS	• Response is often immediate. • Software can be used to analyse responses easily.	• Expensive setup costs to either purchase or develop software to undertake questionnaires. • Access is needed to many mobile phone numbers. • Response rate be small.
Postal	• Response rate is high often 30-50%.	• Can often be expensive and highly time consuming. • Responses maybe contaminated by consultation with others.
Delivery and Collection	• Can be delivered without need for internet access. • Response rate is high often 30-50%	• Can take time to collect the data.

Table 6 Self-completed Questionnaire Analysis (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019)

For the purposes of this research a combination of both delivery & collection and internet collection were used, as utilising a combination of methods can help ensure a better sample coverage (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). Through sending out an internet survey via the tool "Survey Monkey" this allowed the collection of this data to be ongoing throughout the data collection process, this allowed

the researcher to grasp the rates of response and make sufficient changes when appropriate. The method of delivery & collection had a better response rate and supplemented the lower response rate of the internet survey, although this took more time, this was only at specific times and was successfully managed.

3.7.4 Questionnaire Data Collection

The next phase of the questionnaire design process was using the research objectives to understand what data that the questionnaire needed to collect. The data collected added an insight into both research objective 2 and 3:

Assess the key elements that a Small and Medium Enterprise would like to gain from attending an event.

This meant that in the questionnaire, questions were asked that examined the motivations for attending an event. The development of event attendance motivation will be based upon the theories within the literature review, which highlighted two key areas, professional value and knowledge transfer.

Develop an insight into the organisation involved in a successful event for Small and Medium Enterprises.

With relation to this research objective, data collected here was supplementary to the theoretical analysis of the Event Planning Process (2013), the data collected here aimed to provide reasoning and examples of the requirements of the SMEs themselves, applied to the framework.

3.7.5 Questionnaire Questions

The first decision with regards to the questions that are within a questionnaire is if they will be open-ended or closed. Krosnick & Presser (2010) state that open ended questions are those whereby the respondent answers in their own words, with no pre-selected options provided by the researcher. Although more time consuming for the respondent, open-ended questions allow the respondent to provide their own opinion on the subject matter which can lead to additional unexpected knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2019). Krosnick & Presser (2010) state that closed questions are those whereby the respondent can select from several choices. Fink (2016) suggests closed questions are quicker and easier for the participant to answer as they require little writing, which can in some cases help improve levels of response.

The questionnaire in this research utilised both open and closed questions. The collection of data from the closed questions allowed for the analysis of quantitative data. However, the collection of

qualitative data through the open questions also provided a greater insight into research objective 2 as the respondents added their own insight.

3.7.6 Questionnaire Analysis

As many of the questions in the questionnaire were closed, this section will predominantly focus on the methods of quantitative data analysis and how they were used in this research. Quantitative analysis techniques assist in the process of interpreting the data and can range from the production of simple graphs and charts to complex modelling. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) state that there are multiple software analysis tools that can be used such as: SPSS, SAS & STATA. The development of this analysis can often be viewed as a highly complex task for those who are inexperienced, particularly those at a high level of study. The analysis of the questionnaire was one that had multiple forms due to the questions in it, in this instance the open and closed questions resulted in the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. This section describes the methods upon which the data collected was analysed.

It is important to define the quantitative data type that was collected. Within statistical analysis there are four different measurement scales for data, the measurement scales depend on if the data is numerical or categorical. In this instance, all data collected was categorical and therefore the numerical measurement scales are not discussed. The definitions of the categorical measurements are presented in Table 7 below.

Measurement	Definition
Nominal	A nominal scale is used to label a variable that does not have a quantitative value, this data can only be used to measure frequency and spread of occurrence (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). If a variable is divided into only two categories, this is known as dichotomous data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).
Ordinal	This is a more exact type of categorical data; the researcher will know the rank of the variables although the corresponding scores are not recorded (Kampen & Swyngedouw, 2000). This data can therefore be used to measure frequency and spread, but also the order of the values can be understood as well as the median (Kampen & Swyngedouw, 2000).

Table 7 Categorical Data Analysis Measurement Definitions

Primarily, the quantitative data collected in this study was nominal, however one of the questions resulted in ordinal data being collected. With the information that categorical data provides discussed above, the sole method of analysis for the data collected in this questionnaire was frequency analysis. Frequency analysis is a descriptive statistical method that highlights how often a

response has been chosen by a respondent (Landau & Everitt, 2004). To present and produce the best quality of frequency analysis SPSS Statistics was used, this allowed the researcher to calculate not only the frequency but the mode and median of this data (Landau & Everitt, 2004). SPSS statistics was also chosen as it was the most easily accessible tool for the researcher to use. Although the data is presented slightly different as some questions are multiple choice whilst others are singular choice and one question produced nominal data, the data is primarily represented by data graphs and bar charts produced by SPSS software, which is the best method of displaying this type of categorical data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019)

For the remaining questions that were open-ended, as with the data from the interviews, the responses to the open-ended questions are analysed using thematic analysis which was assisted by the six-stage process developed by Braun & Clarke (2006).

3.7.7 Questionnaire Summary

This questionnaire had a large role to play not only in the collection of data in relation to research objective 2 but also to re-enforce ideas and themes as suggested from the interview phase with relation to research objective 3. It is for this reason that the development of the questions within the questionnaire was assisted by the findings of the interview stage.

3.8 Sampling

For any form of data collection, a sample must be identified, simply meaning a group of individuals with specific characteristics which can provide specific data that links to the original research aim and objectives, sampling is split into probability and non-probability (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The sample is taken from the target population, which is those individuals with the specific characteristics that a researcher requires (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng-Abayie, 2017). The target audience for the interview stage of this research was individuals that currently organise events as part of their job role, with a focus on organising events for SMEs. This gave the best possible chance of ensuring that data was collected from those with first-hand experience of organising events.

Probability sampling utilises random sampling techniques to create a specific sample, whereby every individual within a population has a chance of being selected (Adwok, 2015). The main benefit of using this technique is that it allows for data collection that is representative of the population, using this method can also lead to a reduction in bias (Etikan, 2017). One of the drawbacks of using a probability sample is that it can take a long time to process and with a mixed method strategy in place time is essential, it was therefore an easy decision for the researcher to take to use the alternative technique.

Non-probability sampling uses non-random techniques to select a sample, in other words the sample is chosen by the judgement of the researcher (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016). The main benefits of undertaking non-probability sampling are that is considered the better of the two sampling techniques to use when the target population is small and that it is a much more time effective method of sampling (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016). However, Sargeant (2012) suggests this can have a negative impact on the research results as the sample may already have bias opinions or thoughts. It is also important to understand that the very nature of non-probability sampling will reduce the levels of representation within the study (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008). There are four major techniques which can be used within non-probability sampling which are shown in Table 8 below.

Technique	Definition
Quota	A sampling method which allows for a collection of data from a sample group with specific characteristics as defined by the researcher (Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni & Lehmann, 2017).
Purposive	Also known as judgmental sampling or selective sampling, purposive involves the researchers using their own judgement to select individuals as part of their sample (Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni & Lehmann, 2017).
Volunteer	A method where participants volunteer to be a part of the sample when asked or when responding to an advert they have seen (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008).
Haphazard	This involves selecting individuals without any obvious connections to research objectives, chosen purely because of ease of obtaining (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

Table 8 Probability Sampling Definitions

3.8.1 Interview Sample

For this research, a purposive technique was used which allowed the researcher to select individuals who all had a similar characteristic. In this instance the selection of skilled event professionals assisted in exploring research objective three, looking at the organisation of successful SME events. It is important to recognise that within purposive sampling there are multiple techniques that can be used, eight in total and through the utilisation of a flow chart by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) this allowed the researcher to analyse the potential options available within purposive sampling. From the utilisation of this chart, a homogenous purposive sampling method/ technique was identified as the most appropriate technique to use, this is described as a focus on one subgroup where all individuals are similar, for example similar job roles (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). This allowed for a catalogue of strong data to be built upon which a best practice strategy was

developed whilst subtle differences in responses highlighted areas of potential conflict for further study.

3.8.2 Questionnaire Sample

As with the interview phase, the sampling method chosen for the questionnaire stage was non-probability, this was to ensure that each respondent worked within a SME. A purposive technique was used allowing the researcher to select individuals which all have similar characteristics to assist in the collection of data; in this instance the selection of individuals who work within an organisation classified as a SME. The next stage was to decide on the typology of purposive sample that will be used, which again was a homogeneous purposive sample. All respondents were similar in that they worked for SMEs although the firms were of different sizes and based in different sectors.

3.8.3 Number of Interviews

The next decision involved how many interviews were to be conducted. The benefits of undertaking a greater number of interviews are clear according to Bauer & Gaskell (2000) mainly that it leads to a greater volume of data. However, as Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) state this must be weighed up against the associated time costs involved in the data collection as well as the data analysis. For the purposes of this research a decision was taken to conduct five separate interviews. This is a number which allowed sufficient data to be collected which was analysed in depth.

3.8.4 Number of Questionnaires

In the instance of self-completed questionnaires there was no maximum limit to how many could be collected as this was left open for individuals to access throughout the data collection process. However, there was a target for the minimum amount of completed questionnaires needed to produce results that could be considered valid. Following discussions with both supervisors a decision was made to set a minimum number of 75 questionnaire responses and this was achieved.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability of data is massively important to the overall research project as it is can affect the credibility of the results. According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) there are three main areas that can impact the validity and reliability of results: the design of the questions, the structure of the questions and the pilot testing process. The main benefit of developing a pilot is to gain an initial understanding of the results (Hassan, Schattner & Mazza, 2006). Hassan, Schattner & Mazza (2006) also suggest that this allows the researcher to gain an insight as to how the respondent answers the questions with regards to their understanding of what the question is and how it should be answered, which once completed allows the researcher to make changes to the design or layout of the questions before the questionnaire is finalised. However, it is important to note that a pilot

study does not necessarily guarantee that a successful larger study will then take place (Teiljilingen & Hundley, 2002).

3.9.1 Interview Pilot

To improve the validity and reliability of the initial phase of data collection, the questions as part of the interview were submitted to both supervisors, both of whom have experience in this field, for feedback. This feedback was then used to alter specific questions to better align with the initial theory of which they were based on. These changes are shown in Appendix 2. The final questions developed are analysed in Appendix 3.

3.9.2 Questionnaire Pilot

For the purposes of this research a pilot questionnaire was created and sent to three different participants. The main responses from the pilot respondents were that on specific questions they did not have the ability to choose multiple answers which they would have done given the option. This allowed the researcher to slightly modify the questions to allow for multiple responses to be selected. Another issue raised by one participant was that the initial description of the questionnaire was slightly misleading, this was changed immediately by the researcher. These changes are shown in Appendix 4.

3.10 Research Ethics

According to Fouka & Mantzorou (2011) research ethics are the guidelines to follow for the responsible conduct of research and although they can vary from study. Some of the main ethical considerations revolve around five principles, shown in Table 9 below. As Dooly, Moore & Vallejo (2017) suggest it is important that research ethics are respected during the research process to protect all participants. It is important therefore at this stage in the methodology to explain the ethical considerations that were made.

Principle	Description
Minimising the risk of harm	• Interviewees and Questionnaire Participants - No risks were taken outside the risks encountered in normal life therefore no harm was be caused through this research. No participants in the research can be considered as vulnerable.
Obtaining informed consent	• Interviewees - A participant consent form was provided and signed. • Questionnaire Participants - The study was explained at the onset of the questionnaire, whereby consent was confirmed by the participant.
Protecting anonymity and confidentiality	• Interviewees - No interviewees are named directly and are simply referred to by the type of organisation that they work for. • Questionnaire Participants - Any data collected was collated together. Individual respondents will not be named.
Avoid deceptive practices	• Interviewees – Interviewees were aware that they were taking part in the study and had/ have access to both a transcription and audio copy of the interview. • Questionnaire Participants – Copies of both online and paper questionnaire are available.
Right to withdraw	• Interviewees - The offer to withdraw their data was available up until the final draft is submitted. This was made clear on the consent form. • Questionnaire Participant - The offer to withdraw their data was available until the point at which the result is anonymised. This was made clear on the questionnaire.

Table 9 Research Ethics

To align with the University of Huddersfield Ethics Policy for the interview phase, the names of people, places, organisations have all been removed from the interview transcripts. Each interviewee was assigned a letter, along with an anonymised description of their current job role.

Also, to comply with University of Huddersfield regulations the following information was submitted to the Business School Ethics Committee: Ethics Review Form, Information Sheet, Consent Form (Draft), Interview Questions (Draft). After amendments to the initial submitted forms were made, all ethics issues with relation to this research were then approved by the University of Huddersfield Business School Committee, these forms are included in Appendices 5 - 13.

3.11 Limitations of Methodology

The main limitation of this methodology was that there was no traditional set structure that could be adapted to suit this thesis, as would be common in quantitative, experiment-based studies. This caused several issues, mainly that the lack of readily utilised structure meant that data collection

was not as effective as could potentially have been. The extreme difficulty in producing a 'best practice' strategy to develop a methodology in a business context was highlighted by Knudsen (2003). The extent to which this complicated the methodology section is shown within the interview phase, whereby interviews are described as semi-structured but were more akin to a structured interview. This is also highlighted in the questionnaire, the lack of a suitable existing questionnaire, lead to different data sets being collected during this phase, both quantitative and qualitative. The prominent issue that this causes for the researcher is that the process of developing a strategy to collect and analyse the data, was far longer and more complex. This increased the potential for mistakes to be made and ultimately owning an invalid data set, which took a long time to collect.

Another issue within this methodology is the lack of scrutiny of the data collection processes with relation to establishing their validity and reliability. One key area where this is shown is with the lack of a pilot interview which is vitally important to the success of the final data collection as this can not only strengthen the interview questions, but it can also aid in developing the criteria for selecting participants (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim & Yusof (2017). This is also an issue within the second phase: the lack of attention to detail with the questionnaire led to a lower calibre of data being captured. If the researcher had more time and greater experience of conducting quantitative research, this would have led to a higher quality of questionnaire which could have led to improved response rates and a greater depth of insight (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). The main issue that this causes for the research is that it can reduce the validity of the data set and can mean a poorer quality of research. If this part of the data collection needed to be revisited, this would also negatively impact on the amount of time the researcher had to complete the thesis.

4.0 Findings

As Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) state the main purpose of the findings section within a thesis is to present findings from the data collection. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) also suggest that data should be presented simply and efficiently as this is perhaps the most important section of the thesis.

In this section the presentation of the findings will be presented in the order which the data collection process was undertaken. The themes found for each of the interview questions will be presented first followed by an analysis of the data collected in the questionnaire. This chapter will be slightly shorter than would normally be expected as it is of the opinion of the researcher that it is the application of the findings into a real-world scenario, that is of the most value and as such will be discussed in detail in the discussion section of this paper.

4.1 Results – Interviews

A total of five interviews took place for this part of the data collection, four were face-to-face interviews, however due to scheduling issues with one interviewee a telephone interview was conducted as an alternative. The interview was completed by individuals who all regularly organise business-focused events for SMEs. These interviews took place over several months between August and November 2019 and to make this process easier for the researcher the individuals were selected due to their connection with the 3M Buckley Innovation Centre. Table 10 below highlights characteristics of the interviewees.

Interviewee	Gender	Job Role	Organisation
A	Male	Senior Manager	Government Institute
B	Female	Manager	Business Club
C	Female	Business Engagement Officer	European Funded Project
D	Female	Project Officer	Business Support Programme
E	Male	Project Manager	UK Networking Group

Table 10 Interviewee Characteristics

The findings will identify themes that arose from each question of the interview and will include supporting quotations from interviewees. In this process, all interviews were analysed, and codes were developed for each question, which were then transferred into themes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the interviewer; full transcripts of each interview can be found in

Appendices 14-18. For questions that do not have response tables in this section of the report, they can be found in the Appendices.

4.1.1 Objectives

What are the main reasons why you run these events?

The responses to the initial question were varied from interviewee to interviewee, however after some consideration, a theme of increased awareness for the organisation became apparent. This could be described in several different ways, but the goal of the event organisers was to increase awareness of the organisation they worked for and the services they offered, predominantly focused on SMEs. The responses can be found in Appendix 19.

Are there any specific obligations for you to run your events?

The response to this question was highly dependent on the organisation that the individual worked for, those involved with governmental funding either from the UK or the European Union had specific targets to meet that were attached to their programme and utilised events as a method of getting many people together to get involved. Those who had no obligations to run their events, in this instance appeared to use events as a method of adding or enhancing a 'community feel' to their organisation. The responses can be found in Appendix 20 and 21.

How would you define a successful event?

The answers to this question can be categorised into two separate areas: on the day measurements and post event measurements. The most common theme related to on the day measurements was that a successful event had a high level of attendance.

On the Day Measurements - Attendance		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	026-027	"A successful event would obviously be well attended, that's a key indicator, if it's well attended, we know we've hit the mark"
C	023-024	"for me personally a successful event is when there were lots of people there"
D	013-014	"People being there, obviously putting on events, you're marketing them and expecting people to come so I'd say a successful event is getting them there"

Table 11 Theme - On the Day Measurements - Attendance

The second theme related to on the day measurements that arose from this question was the event organiser seeing a high level of attendee satisfaction.

On the Day Measurements – Attendee Satisfaction		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
B	033-034	"we know it's successful if people are leaving and walking away with happy smiling faces and they say "I can use that, that was brilliant, I really enjoyed that"
D	015-016	"people find it useful and getting feedback forms and speaking to people that are there that's how we define if it has been successful event or not"
E	020-012	"I would say a good level of energy in the room and good engagement with people who take part."

Table 12 Theme - On the Day Measurements – Attendee Satisfaction

Post event measurements were slightly different depending on the interviewee but mainly revolved around overall organisational targets related to events, quite simply had the organisation received the benefits it wanted to from running the event.

Post-Event Measurements		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
A	012-015	"so [ORGANISATION] has different ways of looking at the same activity, so it started initially as a Science-cum-strategy activity and looking at it from a scientific and strategic perspective it was about building recognition of [ORGANISATION] within the region"
C	026-029	"did we manage to get expressions of interest for the project that turned into a full application, we also use the roadshows because we run innovation workshops so were we to generate any applications for the workshops"
E	016-018	"We have internally various metrics, so I have a number of introductions that I have to make in a year so if I'm at an event I will record the number of introductions that I make"

Table 13 Theme - Post-Event Measurements

4.1.2 Planning

Environmental

Do you have a calendar of other similar events?

Most interviewees responded that they did have a calendar of events developed within their organisation and that these were all planned well in advance. However, the extent to which they were developed in advanced differed slightly depending on the interviewee. The responses can be found in Appendix 22.

Do you have any "competitors" that run similar events?

There were two significant themes that came out of this question, firstly all interviewees described their knowledge of competition to the researcher. This could either be a direct organisational competition or an event being run at a similar time that may impact attendance.

Competitor Analysis		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	048-049	"yes, there are a number of indirect competitors, not direct I would argue, they might not see it in the same terms though"
B	047-049	"[NEARBY UNIVERSITY] are starting to come into the area and put on events because they're funding for SME's in this area and I know that they're starting to do bits and pieces"
C	044-046	"I do try and do my research in advance, I totally check, I'd go on Eventbrite put on that date and see what was on"
D	040-042	"obviously there's quite a lot of events going on out there, we do look if there is a competitor running, or if there is someone running a similar type of event"
E	034-035	"there are people who run similar events and I'm quite happy to attend those and I try not to duplicate events"

Table 14 Theme – Competitor Analysis

The other significant theme was how several interviewees stated that instead of organising directly against competitors, they would instead attempt to partner up with them.

Collaboration		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
D	041-043	"we do look if there is a competitor running, or there is someone running a similar type of event, we'll then approach them and say "can we do this in collaboration?"
E	035-038	"if there's something happening two months before in a similar location on a similar topic, if I find out about it soon enough, I would hopefully try and say "Look, can we help partner up with this? Would you like someone to come and speak at this event?".

Table 15 Theme - Collaboration

Information

What would you say is the most suitable day to hold an event on?

Here interviewees agreed that the best days were mid-week (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday) with two interviewees specifically stating Tuesday as their preferred day.

Mid-week		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
A	052-053	"It's Tuesday, it's always the second Tuesday of the month, or typically the second Tuesday of every month, it's not a Monday, it's not a Friday"
B	059-060	"We tend to go midweek; Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday are always going to be the best days"
D	050	"Probably a midweek"
E	042-043	"Good question! I tend to avoid Fridays, I would say Tuesday or Thursday would be when I would tend to hold more events, yeah Tuesday or Thursday"

Table 16 Theme – Mid-week

When would you say is the most suitable time of day to hold an event on?

Responses for this question were mixed, but most interviewees preferred to hold their events in the morning.

Breakfast Events		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
B	074-075	"We have tried all sorts, absolutely all sorts, it's just trial and error. I don't know if every area is different, but we seem to find that breakfast events are particularly well attended"
C	050-052	"So we've always done these events as breakfast events we've found that we've made them eight o'clock so people leave early and they can come along before their day as stated and they've got engrossed in their work"
E	055	"I tend to think mornings run better, but not too much of an early start"

Table 17 Theme – Breakfast Events

However, the main theme was that it was difficult to find one optimal time and that choosing the time of an event should be was based on the specific circumstances (e.g., location, specialist area, venue) or past experiences that the event organiser has had.

Feedback		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
A	056-057	"we did in the initial feedback questionnaires ask which time of day they preferred, the majority preferred evening"
B	073	"We have tried all sorts, absolutely all sorts, it's just trial and error"

Table 18 Theme - Feedback

What would you say is the most suitable time of year to hold an event on?

In response to this question all interviewees discussed the certain times they believe should be avoided, which were around the school holiday periods. The responses can be found in Appendix 23.

What are the features that you look for in a venue?

There were three significant themes in the responses to this question firstly, what the organisation is looking for in the venue, this was often a reduced cost venue. The second theme was the accessibility of the venue. The final theme looked at the actual aesthetics of the venue and the elements that the interviewee deemed as required to run an event. The responses can be found in Appendix 24, 25 and 26.

How many staff (if any) do you have available to plan/ run these events?

The responses were very similar from all interviewees in that in most cases an event can be organised from start to finish with only a small number of individuals. The responses can be found in Appendix 27.

Financial

Do you have a budget to run these events?

There were two themes that were taken from the responses to this question by the interviewees, firstly those event organisers who had a budget in place and understood how much they had to spend in the organisation. These responses were from those individuals who has specific obligations to run events.

Budget		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
C	096-097	"We do have a budget set out, my line manager would tell me what the budget was and roughly how much I had to spend for each roadshow"
D	089-090	"It varies on what size event we're doing, but obviously we get from whoever we have won the programme off they will give us a sum of money"
E	117-119	"Yes, we do, and how we tend to operate that is that I will have a budget for a project and at the outset of the project I will have a certain amount to run a certain number of events"

Table 19 Theme - Budget

The theme that emanated from answers given by the remaining two interviewees was that although they do not have a specific budget set they are aware of the importance of managing costs and as a result attempt to reduce costs as much as possible.

No Specific Budget		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	111-113	"No not as a defined budget we have very little out of the door cash costs for these events, so we have an external sponsor who sponsors and covers the cost of the catering"
B	140 147-149	"we try to do everything for as little as possible" "there is no set budget for masterclasses and workshops in particular and it's just judged on an individual basis"

Table 20 Theme – No Specific Budget

Do you charge the attendees?

All interviewees responded that they did not charge for individuals to attend an event, with interviewees also having discussed the impact on their event if they did charge. The responses can be found in Appendix 28.

Operations

What is the main method of content delivery in your events?

The predominant theme discovered in the responses to this question was how most interviewees used a speaker to deliver the event content, more specifically the use of Microsoft PowerPoint. This was another key area that the interviewees discussed.

Microsoft PowerPoint		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	119	"It's chalk and talk"
B	164	"someone will stand up and deliver a talk for it tends to be an hour"
C	106	"all the funders have a PowerPoint"
E	135	"we tend to use PowerPoint"

Table 21 Theme – Microsoft PowerPoint

However, another theme that arose from this question was how the event organisers are looking to improve and alter their content delivery methods to something more interactive.

New Content Delivery Methods		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
A	119-121	"we keep talking about doing something different but haven't decided what that something different is"
E	137-138	"people at our place are looking at new ways that are much more interactive"

Table 22 Theme – New Content Delivery Methods

Does the content of your events follow on from the previous events?

For this question all five respondents stated that their events were all separate with only one interviewing stating that they had attempted to run a series of events before. The responses can be found in Appendix 29.

Do you include a networking period at some point during the event?

The theme running through this question was prevalent and unanimously agreed upon by all interviewees, that a networking period was included in all events, sometimes at multiple points throughout the event. Of all the themes that arose during the interview analysis process, this was, in the opinion of the researcher, the area of most importance for the interviewees.

Allocated Networking Time		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
A	135	"Two networking periods"
B	186-189	"We do and we don't label it networking because that term just seems to turn people off, but we do in a clever and simple way, the best things usually are simple, so we say the event is from half eight until half ten but we will never start at half eight, at half eight there will be tea, coffee and breakfast, that's your networking time"
C	125	"Yeah, I think that's absolutely vital"
D	117-118	"Yes, it's generally a working lunch or sort of half an hour teas and coffees before and within the events"
E	158-159	"Always, as a networking organisation we always do that, whether we do that at the beginning or the end"

Table 23 Theme – Allocated Networking Time

Do you ever use related exhibitors at your events?

Once again in the responses to this question one theme was highly evident, with the interviewees stating that they did use related exhibitors at events. The responses can be found in Appendix 30.

Marketing

How do you ensure (as much as possible) that there is the demand for your events?

The common theme in the responses to this question was that the event organiser would try to gain an understanding for demand by simply asking the potential attendees the what sort of things they would like to see.

Potential Attendee Contact		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	199	"Purely because of asking the members what they want"
D	133-134	"we ask what topics they're interested in we put on the events to cover the demand"

Table 24 Theme – Potential Attendee Contact

How long before the event will you start the marketing campaign?

Most interviewees agreed that the minimum time had to be at least between six and eight weeks before the event. Responses differed with regards to when the campaign should ideally start.

Minimum Six Weeks		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	216	"Six weeks, minimum. Six to eight weeks really."
C	158-159	"I think we'd probably start that around two months before at least, if you can do a little bit longer that's even better"
D	136-137	"we're looking at sort of six to eight weeks"
E	181	"A minimum of six weeks, really three months"

Table 25 Theme – Minimum Six Weeks

What is your most common form of marketing for events?

With regards to this question there were three themes that became apparent in the responses, as with networking this was another area that the researcher believed was particularly important to the interviewees. The first theme that arose was the use of social media within marketing for events.

Social Media		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	149	"we have an active LinkedIn, social media marketing"
B	222	"there's social media"
C	163	"I'd say social media"
D	142	"LinkedIn"
E	184	"We use LinkedIn, we use Twitter"

Table 26 Theme – Social Media

The second theme discovered involved the use and importance of e-mail and mailshots as part of the marketing plan. This could be through the utilisation of tools such as 'Mail Chimp'.

Mailshots		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	149-150	"and we e-shot to our database"
B	218-221	"It would be mailshots, we need to get more clever with this to be honest with you, so we've got a targeted mailing system called Mail Chimp, so we've got this setup and we find that e-mailing is a lot more effective because it's a lot more personal and that's what people want to see"
C	166	"e-mail campaign"
D	142	"we direct e-mail"
E	184-186	"we have newsletters, we've got a general newsletter for the [ORGANISATION] which covers all events and then we each sector has a specific one"

Table 27 Theme - Mailshots

The final theme that arose was the importance of utilising partner organisations in the promotion of events. These could vary from event partners to those local authorities.

Partner Assistance		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	161-162	"a weakness of what we do is that we should have a stronger network of people who like and share LinkedIn postings".
C	163-164	"asking the funders to promote to their networks, so whichever ways that they would promote"
E	188-191	"we also try to link in to the Local Enterprise Partnership if we're holding an event in a certain location and whatever is the business group around that location as well, we'd also go to them as well and we'd also try to use their local businesses."

Table 28 Theme – Partner Assistance

4.1.3 Preparation

How do attendees register to attend the event?

For this question, the key theme in all responses was the event organisers use of online event booking tools, predominantly Eventbrite, with some responses stating the benefits of using Eventbrite. The responses can be found in Appendix 31.

How long before the event do attendees typically register?

Unfortunately, there was no one specific theme that could be identified from the responses to this question. It is of the researcher's opinion that the interviewees did not fully understand the question, which resulted in a mixture of responses on several different topics. Perhaps the best related response to this question was that of Interviewee B who suggested levels of fluctuation would occur depending on the amount of time before the event (240-242):

"when it first goes out you know then they'll be a surge, then they'll be a bit of a lull, then maybe a week to two weeks before hand people will be more up to date with what their availability is and we'll get a last-minute surge"

How often are you likely to send out reminders about the event beforehand?

The theme that occurred throughout the responses to this question was how the likelihood of responses depended on the levels of success that the event organiser was having with regards to the numbers that were already registered. The responses can be found in Appendix 32.

4.1.4 Implementation

As a percentage what would you suggest the dropout rate usually stands at?

In response to this question all interviewees suggested that there would be roughly a 15-35% non-attendance by those who had registered for the event. Some respondents suggested that the

number was at this high level because their events were free to attendees. The responses can be found in Appendix 33.

How many unregistered people are likely to turn up?

Once again interviewees were unanimous in that they expected only a small number of attendees to join the event without registering. The responses can be found in Appendix 34.

How likely are you/ your team to stick to the event plan during the event?

There were two main themes that arose from the responses to this question, the first was that many interviewees were highly practiced in the events they were running so they frequently stuck to the event plan.

Internal Event Plan Success		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
B	256-259	"It's almost just engrained in to us, it is what it is, we turn up to the venue everybody knows their roles [COLLEAGUES] know exactly what they've got to do, I know what I've got to do, we've got the timings, we'll set everything out, everything will run exactly as it should."
D	173-174	"I think that times aren't the only thing that don't differ, I'd say that they generally stick to the agenda"

Table 29 Theme – Internal Event Plan Success

The other theme within the responses to this question was that if there was likely to be any interruptions to the event plan, it was likely to be externally, in most cases the speakers at the event.

External Event Plan Interference		
Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
A	187-188	"In terms of timings, we're going to buy a timer so that it's visible to the speakers and hold them to their timing because that's been poor on the last couple of events"
C	203	"Unless we had a problem with the equipment it generally just carries and stays"
D	230-231	"Most of the time we do, we always tend to leave it fairly flexible anyway, so when the speakers have their slot we tend to find that speakers overrun"

Table 30 Theme – External Event Plan Interference

4.1.5 Legacy

Do you collect feedback from attendees post event?

There was no thematic analysis on the responses to this question as it was simply presented as a yes or no question, their response affecting if the next two questions were relevant. In this instance all event organisers stated that they did collect post-event feedback.

How do you collect this information?

There were two main methods that the interviewees used to collect feedback from the attendees, the first was feedback forms at the event.

Feedback Form		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	193-194	"the event agenda has a feedback form on the back of it"
B	263-264	"we leave feedback forms on the table"
C	215-216	"on every chair at the event I leave a feedback form"
D	184-185	"we have the same sort of feedback form for most events, we hand that out and the end"

Table 31 Theme – Feedback Form

The second method discussed was through post-event feedback surveys delivered through e-mail to those who attended the event. However, interviewees responses were contrasting as to the how effective they believed this method to be.

E-mail		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	262-263	"If we send it out as a Survey Monkey or something like that afterwards that doesn't get a massively great response, that's hit and miss"
C	214-215	""I tend to find if you e-mail a feedback form after the event, then the response would be extremely low"
E	248-249	"We tend to use our system that works behind the scenes our CRM system we would send a link out from that asking for feedback"

Table 32 Theme – E-mail

How do you utilise the feedback to improve your events?

The responses given by the interviewees were varied and this very much depended on examples of feedback that they had been given. However, the theme that linked the responses together was how

the event organiser had utilised the feedback in the process for organising future events. The responses can be found in Appendix 35.

Do you provide feedback to the venue?

The main theme from the responses to this question was that often feedback was not given to the venue unless it was specifically asked for by the employee at the venue. Some interviewees also mentioned that they would provide feedback if there was anything negative to report. The responses can be found in Appendix 36.

How effective do you believe your events have been?

As all interviewees have their own measurements of effectiveness for their events, there was not one set theme within the responses to this question. However, all interviewees did believe that their events had been a success.

4.2 Key Findings

The next stage of the data collection process involved analysing the four key themes identified throughout the interview analysis. It is important that these themes are recognised as these are the areas that will now provide the basis for the questions within the questionnaire. These areas are networking importance, marketing methods, content delivery improvement and date/ time preferences.

Networking Importance

All the interviewees mentioned that at some point within their events they hold at least one networking period, simply a chance for the attendees to chat to each other. The methods in which this was delivered varied on the interviewee and how they implemented networking time, or if they even refer to it as networking within the agenda. Most interviewees even described how they would use either food or drink to encourage networking between attendees. The importance of networking was highlighted throughout each response to this question and can be perhaps best summed up in this quote by Interviewee C (130-134):

"A lot of the business owners are time poor, so to get through with a digital marketing message is quite hard, whereas if you have had that networking contact and you've exchanged business cards, you've had a conversation it's much more powerful, so I find it's vital to have that networking time."

Marketing Methods

Regarding marketing the interviewees all placed importance on two methods: social media (such as LinkedIn and Twitter) and e-mail shots. This is understandable given that the organisations which

took part are not multi-million-pound organisations and are less likely to be able to afford traditional, more expensive marketing campaigns. In addition to this another theme identified was to ask partner organisations to also assist in the marketing push. This is best shown in a quote by Interviewee E (188-191):

"We also try to link into the Local Enterprise Partnership if we're holding an event in a certain location and whatever is the business group around that location as well, we'd also go to them as well and we'd also try to use their local businesses."

Content Delivery Improvement

Most interviewees described their methods of content delivery as primarily presentations by industry-based speakers, most suggested that these speakers used PowerPoint presentations. However, one theme identified was that the interviewees saw PowerPoint as quite old fashioned and were always looking for different ways to get their message across to the attendees, from utilising new technology to having a case study providing a real-life example. The need for an improved way to deliver content and the struggle to find this is perhaps best explained by Interviewee A (119-123):

"It's chalk and talk, so that is a bit of a weakness, it's largely chalk and talk we keep talking about doing something different but haven't decided what that something different is, it's easy to say do something different, do something radical, do something more engaging but then you say okay, tell me what to do, but the people who say that then turn round and say "I don't have a clue"."

Date/ Time Preferences

In response to this question the interviewees were unanimously set on their date preferences, which were typically during mid-week (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and not in school holiday periods. However, the lack of agreement on a time of day was noted, despite each interviewee having their preference of what time they thought would work best usually based on their prior experiences with other events. Interviewee B perhaps best described it (073):

"We have tried all sorts, absolutely all sorts, it's just trial and error."

4.3 Final Questionnaire Design

As discussed, the final questionnaire questions were influenced from the key findings that were identified by the researcher as discussed by the event organisers in the interview phase. A full analysis of the questions that were asked as part of this process can be found in Appendix 37 and the final design of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 38.

4.4 Results – Surveys

Overview

The survey received 75 responses by individuals who currently work within SMEs, be that an individual employee or owner of an SME. Out of the total number collected, 35 were collected using the online survey tool 'Survey Monkey'. These were distributed via e-mail to individuals selected by the researcher who matched the sample criteria. The 40 paper copies were distributed and collected at events which targeted those who worked within SMEs.

As previously discussed, the quantitative data within this survey was analysed using SPSS Statistics. The responses to the single choice questions within this questionnaire will be presented using bar charts. The multiple-choice responses will be displayed in frequency tables. The themes within the responses to the final two open-ended questions of the questionnaire are then presented.

How many business-related events have you attended in the past year? (Single Choice)
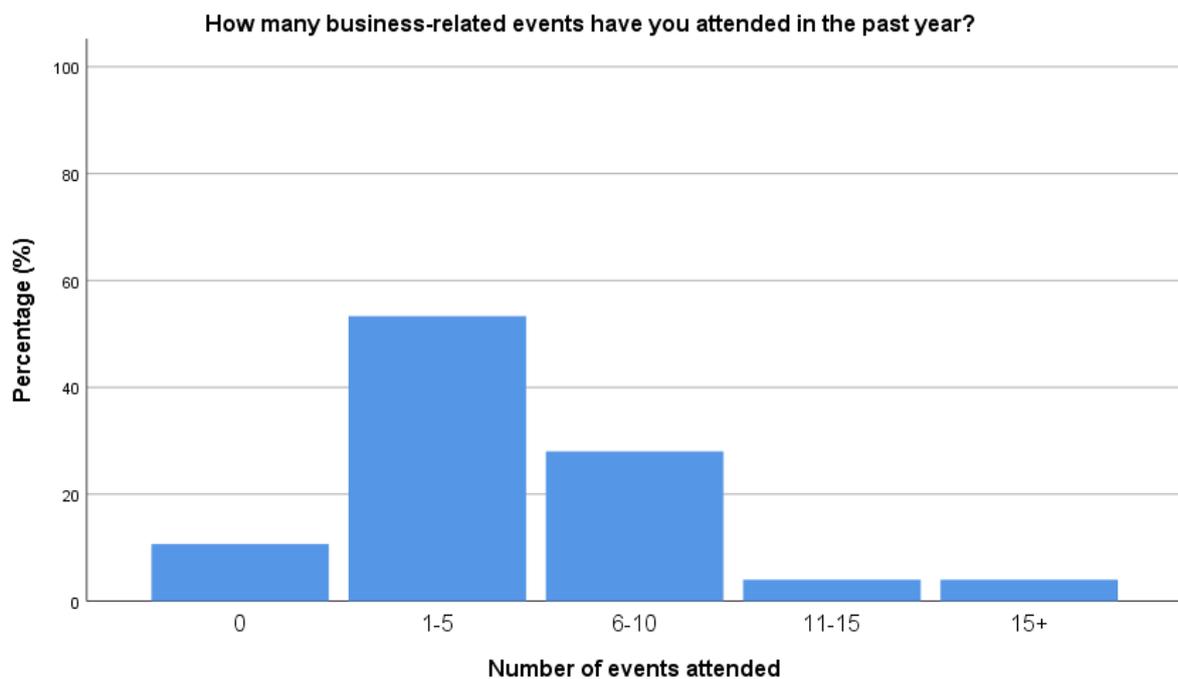
Figure 4 Number of Events Attended

As the data shows only 10.7% of those surveyed have not been to any events in the last year, meaning that the remaining 89.33% have been to at least one. The majority of those surveyed (53.3%) have been to between one and five business event(s) in the last year.

What would be your preferred day to attend an event? (Multiple Choice)

Preferred Days

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Preferred Days	Monday	11	9.4%	14.7%
	Tuesday	28	23.9%	37.3%
	Wednesday	30	25.6%	40.0%
	Thursday	28	23.9%	37.3%
	Friday	15	12.8%	20.0%
	Saturday	4	3.4%	5.3%
	Sunday	1	0.9%	1.3%
Total		117	100.0%	156.0%

Figure 5 Preferred Day(s)

The results show that by far the most popular days are midweek days (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) as all three were selected by at least a third of those who answered the question. Wednesday proved to be the most popular with 40.0% of the respondents selecting this option.

What would be your preferred time to attend an event? (Multiple Choice)

Time Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Time of Day	Early Morning	11	12.9%	14.7%
	Morning	28	32.9%	37.3%
	Afternoon	22	25.9%	29.3%
	Evening	24	28.2%	32.0%
Total		85	100.0%	113.3%

Figure 6 Preferred Time(s)

The results for this question are very close, the morning period (37.3%) being slightly preferred over afternoon (29.3%) and evening (32.0%). The least selected option the was early morning option with only 14.7% of the respondents selecting it.

What is your primary motivation for attending business events? (Multiple Choice)

Motivations for Attendance

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Motivation Attendance	Knowledge	46	47.9%	61.3%
	Clients	12	12.5%	16.0%
	Competitors	4	4.2%	5.3%
	Networking	34	35.4%	45.3%
Total		96	100.0%	128.0%

Figure 7 Motivations for Attendance

In this question there were two clear preferred options which were to: gain knowledge (61.3%) and network (45.3%). Only 5.3% of respondents stated that one of their primary motivations was to gain a greater level of understanding into their competition.

What is your preferred method of content delivery at an event? (Multiple Choice)

Content Delivery Methods

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Content Delivery Method	Speaker	50	29.2%	66.7%
	Workshop	33	19.3%	44.0%
	Demo	40	23.4%	53.3%
	Panel	24	14.0%	32.0%
	Peer	24	14.0%	32.0%
Total		171	100.0%	228.0%

Figure 8 Preferred Methods of Content Delivery

As the data shows a speaker presentation is the most preferred method with 66.7% of the respondents selecting this. A practical demonstration follows with 53.3%, whilst peer to peer discussions and panel discussion were the joint least selected options with 32.0% of respondents selecting both.

How much do you value networking at a business event? (Single Choice)
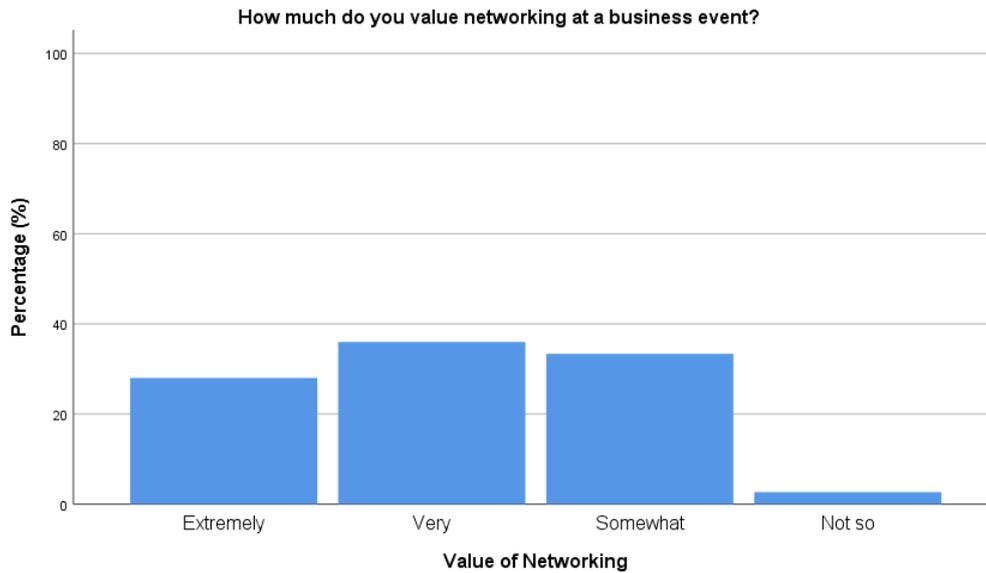
Figure 9 Importance of Networking

The results show that networking is valued at least somewhat by 97.3% of the respondents as only 2.7% of respondents suggested that they did not value networking at an event. No respondents selected the not at all option on the questionnaire, therefore this option is not represented on the frequency analysis.

Do you believe that dedicated networking time should be allocated at a business event? (Single Choice)

Do you believe that dedicated networking time should be allocated at a business event?
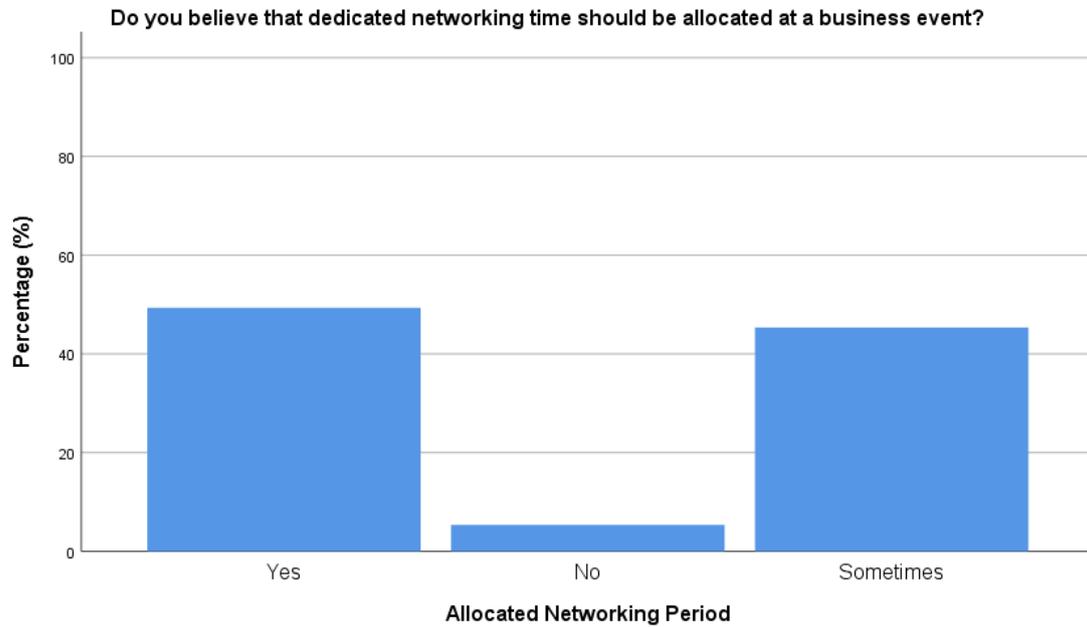
Figure 10 Allocated Networking Period

As the results show only 5.3% of respondents did not want any specific time allocated for networking, whilst the remaining 94.7% had said that they would like a networking period either sometimes or every time.

How do you typically hear of upcoming events? (Multiple Choice)

Marketing Channels

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Marketing Channels	Eventbrite	33	16.2%	44.0%
	Word of Mouth	38	18.6%	50.7%
	Email	61	29.9%	81.3%
	Google	5	2.5%	6.7%
	LinkedIn	40	19.6%	53.3%
	Twitter	16	7.8%	21.3%
	Other Social Media	7	3.4%	9.3%
	Newspaper	1	0.5%	1.3%
	TV	1	0.5%	1.3%
	Radio	2	1.0%	2.7%
Total		204	100.0%	272.0%

Figure 11 Marketing Channels

In this instance the most common marketing channel of how attendees hear about events is through e-mail which 81.3% of the respondents selected. Other common methods included LinkedIn (53.3%), word of mouth (50.7%) and Eventbrite (44.0%). More traditional marketing channels such as radio, T.V and newspaper all had less than 3.0% of respondents selecting them.

Finally, how would you describe a successful event? (Open Question)

Out of 75 a total of 64 responses were given to this this question. The prevalent themes in the responses to this question were: increasing levels of knowledge, beneficial networking opportunities and good all-round organisation of the event.

Within increasing levels of knowledge there were several different responses linked to this theme, the most prominent answer mentioned was to develop new ideas and this is best represented in the responses:

"Something that gives me new ideas I can put forward to my business."

"Learn something new in area of technology or business that helps me improve me or my business".

Another area linked to levels of knowledge described by several respondents was increasing their levels of understanding in relation to the real-world implications of either a product or service.

"Learn something new and its real-world implications".

Knowledge (26)	
Issue	**Number of Responses**
New Knowledge	15
Industry Updates	4
New Ideas	3
Detailed Information	2
Information backed up with data and research	2

Table 33 Knowledge

Beneficial networking opportunities was another area which was mentioned in thirty-three responses to this question. Most of the responses included making new contacts and catching up with old contacts as shown in the response:

"New contacts, follow up activities, catching up with contacts".

Another area mentioned several times was that a successful event involves many people in attendance, this appeared at the start of many responses before the respondent made a different point which would relate to another theme for example:

"Good attended, beneficial outcome, appropriate length".

Networking (33)	
Issue	**Number of Responses**
New contacts	13
Lots of attendees	9
Working together to develop opportunities	4
Peer to peer communication	4
Interesting attendees	2
Follow up meetings with new contacts	1

Table 34 Networking

The final theme that arose from this question was good all-round organisation. Unlike the other themes developed which both have strong main issues supplemented by other smaller points, there were multiple responses which when collated together made theme of good organisation. One of the elements mentioned was that the event had to be succinct which is best represented in the following responses:

"Quick, informative and to the point".

"Runs smoothly, it is noticed when it doesn't go smoothly".

Organisation (31)	
Issue	**Number of Responses**
Succinct	6
Runs smoothly	5
Quality of Food	3
Focused	3
Pre- and post-event communication	3
Relaxed Atmosphere	3
Good Venue	3
Possibility of further events	2
Mix of activity	2
Well Marketed	1

Table 35 Organisation

Please share any other comments you have below (Open Question)

There were four responses to this question. All the responses to this question were related to the theme of good organisation, perhaps the most interesting quote regarding this was:

"It shouldn't be called out as networking because increases pressure. Networking should happen naturally - you just need to create the right environment".

5.0 Discussion

As Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) state the purpose of the discussion section is to discuss the results presented in the previous section in relation to the research objectives that were set at the start of the thesis. This section therefore will look at each research objective and adapt the relevant data from the findings to present answers to the objectives.

5.1 Research Objective 1

Develop an understanding of the characteristics commonly associated with Small and Medium Enterprises and how these can act as barriers to technology adoption.

The predominant share of information in relation to this research objective was discussed in the literature review. This objective was more concerned with collecting the information necessary to understand the issues SMEs are facing and how they can be incorporated into the overall study. This section will give an overview of the key issues highlighted in the literature review along with information that was indirectly collected in both phases of data collection and how this has influenced the initial literature review findings.

5.1.1 Knowledge Gaps

Often within a SME the decision to implement a new technology will often rest with the primary decision maker and the successful implementation of the technology depends on the level of knowledge that the key individual has (Drew, 2003, Urbancova, 2013). However, as Chao & Chandra (2012) suggest there is often gaps within that individual's knowledge and if the full extent of the benefits/ drawbacks of implementing an often-expensive new technology are not identified correctly than it can be detrimental in the long term. A lack of understanding can lead to an unsuitable decision being made, but as a report by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2019) suggests a lack of knowledge with regards to the latest industry developments can also lead to no decision at all with regards to technology adoption as the organisation is unaware of the latest advances and the benefits that they can bring.

This is emphasised in Question 4 of the survey whereby 61.33% of those asked stated that one of their primary reasons for attending events was to gather knowledge. When the respondents in the survey were asked about what makes a successful event in Question 9 a significant number suggested it was increasing their levels of knowledge. This could include real world updates in a discipline or the generation of new ideas they can implement into their business.

5.1.2 Financial Constraints

As Gnyawali & Park (2009) suggest the initial outlay for a new technology within an organisation can be huge, particularly for an SME. In addition to this there are also often large running costs that are associated with these technologies in areas such as staff training and maintenance costs (Devitt, 2017). With the importance of a healthy cash flow vital to the success of an SME according to Hatten (2012) it is no surprise that some SMEs may not be able to overcome the financial impact of implementing new technologies.

Understanding of this barrier was not massively emphasised or indirectly discussed by any individual in the data collection phase. However, the importance of funding bodies which can assist SMEs was highlighted by several interviewees when discussing who they would like to have exhibit at their events. Firstly, it is the job role of Interviewee C to organise funding roadshows around different regions to highlight to SMEs what financial (amongst other) support is available to help. Secondly Interviewee A noted that during their events they 'offer other business support programmes'. From the SME perspective it could appear as if there is limited support for any new investment in technology and that with regards to finance, this investment can be daunting. However, as found in this research, there are several organisations/ event organisers who aim to support a SME through this process.

5.1.3 Time Poor

In the Literature Review section of this paper, the third major barrier to technology adoption is described as Staff Training and Development. However, during the data collection the emphasis by both the interviewees and SMEs was on the lack of time that SMEs have at their disposal. The lack of time can act as a barrier both before and during the adoption of a new technology (Telegraph Spark, 2019). As previously mentioned, the lack of time for a key SME decision maker can lead to a lack of understanding of the latest developments and the potential costs involved in the technology adoption (Chao & Chandra, 2012). During the implementation of the technology within the organisation, the length of time needed in training and development for staff can impact the ability of the SME to generate revenue and therefore survive (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019).

Although not directly related to technology adoption, this issue was raised during the interview phase with both Interviewee C and Interviewee E discussing how they have had to change the running time of their events as SMEs were often time poor. This was also mentioned in several survey responses with a number highlighting the time constraints they faced and as a result preferred events to be concise and succinct.

5.1.4 Utilising this information in Events Management

Understanding of this research objective offers the event organiser a greater understanding of their target market and their specific wants and needs. Examples of how this can be used by the event organiser when planning for future events are in Table 36 below.

Events Management	
Knowledge Gaps	Event Organisers can look to develop plans for events with the main objective to increase the level of knowledge for an SME, this can be for either for an emerging key topic or a new technology.
Financial Constraints	At events SMEs can be informed of options of how they can receive access to finance from different funding bodies. Similarly, an event can be run with a reduced cost or no cost for the SME to attend.
Time Poor	Event Organisers can look to run shorter, more concise events that will not require a large part the day for the SMEs.

Table 36 Research Objective 1 – Use of Information in Events Management

5.2 Research Objective 2

Assess the key elements that a Small and Medium Enterprise would like to gain from attending an event.

The data in relation to this research objective was largely collected through the questionnaire. This data was also supplemented by information provided by the interviewees, although the questions asked here were not explicitly related to this objective. This main aim of this section is to highlight the key elements of what the attendee would like to gain from attending the event.

5.2.1 Added Value

There were two prevalent themes in the responses to question number 9 of the survey, that looked at what the attendee believed a successful event was, which were an increase in knowledge and an increase in business contacts. For the purposes of this thesis, it is suggested that both elements can be categorised under the label of adding value to an organisation, this was a label given by several of the respondents. Quite simply as one respondent in the questionnaire commented "Add value to business, where you can learn and build connections". It is therefore important to understand a definition of added value. However, it can have a variety of meanings within a business context and the perception of the term can differ from peer to peer (de Chernatony, Daniels & Johnson, 1993). This opinion is reinforced by research from de Chematony, Harris, & Riley (2015) which suggests there is no one set definition of the meaning of added value; it can change depending on the

industry in which it is used. In this instance it could be determined that added value represents the application of what is taken away from the event, which can be utilised to improve business performance. Therefore this could be through either a development of knowledge or an increase in contacts.

5.2.2 Knowledge Development

The first theme within added value is knowledge development. Knowledge development could be viewed as an all-encompassing term with no real substance. However, in this instance it can be simplified into the attendee wanting to learn new information. Examples of this could be learning about new technologies or hearing about recent updates in that industry. Research into the event attendance motivations of an employee of an SME is sparse, however literature from several academic authors suggests that education has long been a been a major factor in event attendance motivation (Ngamsom, Beck & Lalopola, 2001, Lee, 2016). Although these studies did not take place specifically in the context of an SME, the prior research in this thesis has identified knowledge gaps as a major issue for the key decision makers within SMEs.

An increase in knowledge can lead to several different benefits for the SME, the most predominantly described way is through the generation of new ideas. Watson & Newby (2005) state one of the key features of an entrepreneurial SME owner is that often they want to be on the pulse of what is new and they want to be the first to develop new ideas, in such a way that they attempt to get their inspiration from a number of different sources.

5.2.3 Contact Development

Although this element could be more commonly described as networking, data collected from both stages of this thesis suggested that individuals did not appreciate the term and instead would prefer something more relaxed and not labelled as the time to talk. Indeed Coburn (2016) believes that the traditional networking events are a poor utilisation of an SMEs time and that they must be managed correctly for the attendees to experience value. It is for this reason with old, tired conceptions of networking that the term contact development has instead been chosen.

The theme of contact development, as with knowledge development, can seem an all-encompassing, generic term. However, data collected here suggested that the individuals from SMEs attended the events to increase their number of contacts, which could lead to several outcomes such as collaboration on a new project or finding a new supplier. Contact development has a huge role to play in motivations for attending events (Ngamsom, Beck & Lalopola, 2001, Lee, 2016). When related back to SMEs the level of which contact development can impact that organisation in the longer term is huge. Contact development can have several important influences on success such as

discovering new opportunities, easier access to resources and educational development (Tendai, 2013). It is of no surprise therefore, that this element was key a motivator for those attending events and the importance of allocating a time, labelled or otherwise, should not be underestimated.

5.2.4 Utilising this information in Events Management

The two components of added value are key to the development of understanding how an event should be organised in such a way that the attendee can take away as much as possible. There are three trends related to knowledge development emanating from the data that must be followed by the event organiser in relation to how information is shared:

1. Any new knowledge presented must be relevant to the organisations that will be attending the event, time is precious to SMEs and must therefore not be wasted.
2. The knowledge must be applied to a scenario to which the attendees will be able to link to their own business.
3. Those who present the knowledge should be able to speak at a level to which those they are presenting to can easily understand and take full benefit.

It is vital to ensure that the event organiser understands the value of contact development at events. As suggested in several interviews, contact development is highly important both before and after the event. This can be integrated with other elements of the event such as the registration and refreshments. Whilst developing an agenda for the event, it is important that the event organiser attempts to steer clear of labelling the allotted period(s) as networking. This can alienate certain individuals who are disillusioned with the term and what they perceive it to mean. Conversations between attendees can happen naturally.

5.3 Research Objective 3

Develop an insight into the organisation involved in a successful event for Small and Medium Enterprises.

The data collected in relation to the final research objective came from both the questionnaire and interview phases. This section proposes a definition of a 'successful event' and then presents model which can utilised in the development of an event aimed at those who work for SMEs.

5.3.1 A Successful Event

Ultimately, the definition of a successful event is very much dependent on the stake that the individual has in the event. Different people will have different thoughts as to whether they believe an event has been successful. However, the common theme throughout the data collection phase is that success is predominantly measured in the outcomes that the individual has post event.

With the above in mind, it is now important to analyse who are the two most important stakeholders in the event process and how they will each define success. Success for the organiser revolved around whether they had achieved their aims they had set prior to the event. All interviewees mentioned in some capacity that the targets that they set mainly focused upon a positive outcome for their organisation. Ultimately, success for the event organiser was defined by success for their organisation. This is to be expected however, events have been increasingly used within organisations to meet their long-term strategic goals (Crowther, 2010). As Getz (2012) states events can be utilised as a tool to help deliver organisational targets. Organisations in the United Kingdom invest heavily in this area spending a total of £19.9 billion to run conferences and meetings, with this level of spend they will need to measure a strong return on their investment (Business Visits & Events Partnership, 2014). As previously described, a successful event for the attendees involves increasing both their levels of knowledge development and contact development.

There was also an additional way in which success could be measured, described by both the event organisers and attendees. This was the quality of the organisation of the event. This was a response commonly mentioned in the questionnaire responses (48%). Multiple responses described how an event had to be well organised to be successful. To break this down further attendees looked for good organisation pre (well marketed), during (succinct and smooth) and post event (further information distributed). However, it is no surprise that attendees will look for a quality level of organisation in an event, as LeBlanc & Nosik (2019) suggest poorly organised meetings can potentially have an undesirable impact on all the attendees. This was an opinion shared by all interviewees, however most appeared to be slightly more modest to the extent at which they believed their organisational skills were responsible for the success an event. It is of the opinion of the researcher that the skills needed to organise, plan and manage a successful event are complex and that events management has an ever-increasing role to play within many industries, an opinion also suggested by Bladen & Kennell (2014).

5.3.2 Event Planning Process for SMEs Framework

As previously stated, the purpose of this objective was to develop a framework that could be used to organise business events aimed at those employed by SMEs. To develop this model, a base framework was used, the Planning Process for Events by Shone & Parry (2013). The data collected throughout this research has helped to shape this framework into something which the researcher believes is suitable for use in industry. This section will explain each area of the model. This will be backed up by literature and responses from the data collection. The final model developed can be found in Figure 12.

The model looks at the elements which combine to make the five different phases of organising an event, all of which are considered key in the process. It is the opinion of the researcher that there are several strengths of this model which would make it beneficial to use in industry. Firstly, the development of the framework through data collected from both attendees and event organisers means that the development process has included feedback from those who attend and not just the organisers themselves something which offers a huge advantage over other models.

The framework unlike many other models has been developed with a clear focus on events for SMEs, something in the wider field of Events Management is overlooked in favour of mega-events such as the Olympic Games. This means that for many event organisers this can be used straight away without the need for it to be adapted to their smaller scale events.

Unlike the Shone and Parry (2012) model, there is a greater emphasis on how this process must be cyclical. This is another one of the strengths of the model, the clear focus on the cyclical nature of the process, will act as a permanent reminder to the event organiser of the importance of constant feedback monitoring and subsequent improvement.

This framework is unlike many other academic tools in that the process follows an upward flow. This highlights the importance of developing a solid foundation and how it can assist when developing an event. The framework is similar in several ways to a theory produced by Mallen & Adams (2017) developed for the purposes of event management in tourism and recreation.

TIER 5
Legacy

Post-Event Analysis
Feedback Collection
Internal De-Breifing
Post-Event P.R & Marketing

POST-EVENT

TIER 4
Lead & Event

Preperation & Implementation
Task Development
Primary Events Management
Incident Response

CONCISE PLAN

TIER 3
Internal Operations

Finance
Full Financial Analysis
Develop RoI Calculations
Explore Sponsorship Opportunities

Event Logistics
Set Delegation Duties
External Partner Liasion
Health & Safety Analysis

Marketing
Identify Marketing Stages
Content Development
Identify Distribution Channels

FIRM PLAN

TIER 2
Event Outline

Environment
Competitor Analaysis
Calculate Potential Demand
Stakeholder Identification

Preliminary Logistics
Date & Time Discussion
Venue Analysis
Event Design

DRAFT PLANS

TIER 1
Aims & Objectives

Aims & Objectives
Discuss Organisation Aims
Understand Attendee Aims
Generate Event Ideas

Figure 12 – Events Planning Process for SMEs Framework

5.3.3 Tier 1 - Aims & Objectives

The next section of this thesis will explore each of the tiers of the framework in depth, providing an explanation of what each tier will involve and will offer suggestions to what would be most suitable for SMEs to the event organiser, through an analysis of the data collected during the survey phase.

During this phase, the team organising the event should have a clear understanding of not only what their organisations aims are for the event, but to also have an idea of what the individual employed by the SME aims to gain from attending the event.

The importance of setting clear aims and objectives in event management, as with any organisation is huge, as clearly defined aims will form a strong basis of the intent and direction of the event (Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde, 2012). This will help to set objectives that will help fulfil these aims and help shape the way in which the event is run, delivered and evaluated post-event (Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde, 2012). One of the most common methods of ensuring good quality objectives is to make all objectives; SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related) (Mallen & Adams, 2017). The importance of target setting, was evident particularly during one interview with Interviewee D (100-102) "it's just all about getting, our targets, we're target driven within the programme, so it's all about meeting those targets".

As previously stated, the main objectives for the event organisers are often to fulfil the requirements of their employer, whereas the main objective for the attendee is to 'add value' to their organisation. At the end of this phase of the planning process several

event ideas should have been generated and from this several draft plans should be taken into the next stage.

5.3.4 Tier 2 - Event Outline

At this stage, a number of draft plans should be analysed to test their feasibility not only in relation to if they can practically run, but also to test the strength at which they will be able to meet the previously set aims and objectives.

This stage has two separate branches which create a greater understanding of which plan would be the best to take forward. One of the two aims is to gain a greater understanding of the environment upon which the event will take place, essentially aiming to discover if there will be enough demand for the event and analysing the competition. Although, most thinking with regards to understanding levels of demand for an event is typically associated with leisure and sport events, it is still extremely important as with business events (Reic, 2017). There are several ways in which levels of demand

can be explored, utilising past internal data for similar events and exploring the demographics of the area (Reic, 2017). During the data collection there was a clear three-way approach that the event organiser used to gain an insight into the demand for an event which was as follows:

- Asking SMEs what type of event they would like to attend i.e., what topics they are interested in.
- Working alongside partner organisations to see what the latest trend in their industry is.
- Analysing the latest government strategies and hunting for the latest buzzwords.

This branch also involves analysing what the competition are doing with regards to how their events are organised such as: when they are running their events, how many events they are running and what topics they are running their events on. The importance of this is suggested by Van Niekerk & Getz (2019) who state that insight into a competitor can highlight several different issues that maybe hampering the success of the events for the organisation. The data collected during the interviews represented that all event organisers understood what competitors that they may have in their area. The most common method put into practice by the event organisers was to use Eventbrite and other search engine tools to find other events. However, appearing to contradict most of the longstanding rules of business, the event organisers often looked to partner up and run joint events with those who would be perceived to be competitors. Like the theory of 'coopetition' described with relation to high value technology in the literature review section, the event managers appeared to proactively seek those running similar events and offered to collaborate, perhaps best described by Interviewee E (035-038) "if there's something happening two months before in a similar location on a similar topic, if I find out about it soon enough I would hopefully try and say "Look, can we help partner up with this? Would you like someone to come and speak at this event?". The perceived benefits of this as described by the interviewees, is that it allows organisations to share resources in terms of databases and funding for the events itself.

The second branch of this phase looks at the preliminary logistics of organising the event, the areas include day/ time, venue and content delivery. As Pielichaty, Els, Reed & Mawer (2017) state selecting a suitable date can be a key element in the levels of success attributed to an event. Data collected from the interviewees all suggested that the school holidays should be avoided. Data collected from the survey explored this further by looking at the specific dates and time that would be suitable to the attendees. Most of the responses suggested either Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday with very few opting for a weekend. Finding a time that was accepted unanimously by both organisers and attendees was difficult, with neither morning, afternoon nor evening standing out in the results. Often for the organisers the events were at a time that best suited the

circumstances upon which they were working (such as availability of car parking) as oppose to a personal preference.

The next stage of the preliminary logistical plan involves the selection of a suitable venue. The venue can be crucial to the event, the choice of venue does not just solely effect attendee numbers, it also effects the operations plan and the quality of the venue can lead to a link by association to the organisation that is running it (Mallen & Adams, 2017). This was reflected in the responses by the interviewees, many were worried on how the venue would affect the reputation of their organisation as Interviewee B stated (118-120) "if it doesn't fit with our brand and image then we can't use it because we've got a specific clientele that expect a specific level from us". The interviewees looked for several features in a venue that they believed would help their event to be successful:

- Good accessibility either via public transport or car.
- Modern functioning audio visual facilities.
- Spacious areas with natural light.
- Reasonable cost or provided free of charge.

The final step of this stage is to design what the event will look like, in other words, how long the event will be and how the content will be delivered. As previously discussed, it is important the information is presented in a way that can be understood and applied to an organisation as well as being delivered succinctly and concisely. Although once again there was no clear method that the respondents to the questionnaire preferred with regards to content delivery it was clear that the event organisers, whilst mainly using PowerPoint presentations, were always looking for new methods of content delivery. As Interviewee A states (119-123) "it's largely chalk and talk we keep talking about doing something different but haven't decided what that something different is, it's easy to say do something different, do something radical, do something more engaging but then you say okay, tell me what to do, but the people who say that then turn round and say "I don't have a clue".

At the end of this stage a singular plan should be in place with the basic information above included, which can then be further developed in the next section.

5.3.5 Tier 3 - Internal Operations

In this phase the draft plan should be developed in greater finalised detail, to provide a full breakdown to the event team of what their roles and responsibilities will be throughout the remainder of the process. This is the most vital stage of the whole event process.

This section focuses on three main branches that form the bulk of the detailed plan, these are: finance, event operations, and marketing. The overall importance of this section and how critical it is to the final success of the event on the day should not be underestimated. As Silvers (2008) shows in the event project life cycle this is the phase upon which the highest level of activity will be happening. Bladen, Kennell, Absen & Wilde (2012) suggest that this is because this stage involves looking at all aspects of the event and formulating what will happen over a long period of time, often in a short period of time. Bladen, Kennell, Absen & Wilde (2012) also suggest that these plans are often best represented by Gantt Charts which are key to highlighting each phase, the individual(s) responsible for carrying out this operation and the length of time that this is expected to take.

This first branch of this section involves the logistics plan for the event. This involves allocating different roles and responsibilities to different members of the team. Although every event is different and every logistics plan will vary, there are a number of key areas that will be used for most events such as: marketing, audio visual, attendee management (Bladen, Kennell, Absen & Wilde, 2012). Several interviewees suggested that they cover multiple areas and in some cases, it would be just the one individual to manage and implement all the areas. Regardless of the size of the event, it is vital that all health and safety policies are in place at this stage and that the potential hazards are analysed in detail. For the purposes of this framework this is an important step to ensure that all team members understand their role and to ensure that contingencies are in place as one absence in a small team can create a big impact.

Financial planning is key to running successful event, as Pielichaty, Els, Reed & Mawer (2017) state an understanding of the finances will allow the team to be able to understand the feasibility of their plans and make changes where necessary. This phase primarily involves measuring the expenditure which could include venue hire, speaker hire, audio visual equipment and catering. This is whilst also measuring income, although all interviewees mentioned that they typically did not charge for their events. Despite the importance of this stage, many interviewees stated that although they had a specific budget to run each event, they did not have a full financial plan in place. All interviewees stated that they attempted to reduce their costs as much as possible through several methods such as searching for sponsorship or partnering with another organisation. For the purposes of this framework, it is important to understand the budget and plan accordingly.

The importance of a having a strong marketing plan in place for the event cannot be underestimated, as Reic (2017) suggests it is the key to getting the desired levels of attendance at an event. The data collected in this research has shown there to be two phases in the marketing plan for an SME event. Firstly, the production of the materials which will be used to promote an event

which are often prepared quickly and in-house. The second phase involves the channels upon which this content will be distributed. There were two main methods that event organisers used, firstly through social media platforms such as: LinkedIn and Twitter and secondly through direct e-mail to their contact list. Respondents to the questionnaire then named social media and e-mail as their main ways that they heard of events. They also mentioned how influential word of mouth was in this process. Whilst planning a marketing strategy it is essential that material is distributed on social media and through e-mail shots, whilst also encouraging team members to talk to potential attendees and inform them.

At the end of this section a Gantt Chart should be produced where all individuals involved in the running of the event will understand their roles and responsibilities for the rest of the process. This should be in place at minimum ten weeks before the event.

5.3.6 Tier 4 - Lead & Event

It is here where the developed plan will be put into action and the event will be run. This stage will help decide if the plan has been a success or not. It is also here where the skills of the Event Manger will be tested the most, adaptiveness and problem solving will be key for any issues that arise.

The preparation and implementation of the plan before and during the event is key, as Shone & Parry (2013) state this can help reduce uncertainty, allowing the event team to focus on any potential issues if they arise. Here the two phases of the Shone & Parry model are merged into one, due to the emphasis on the levels of intricate planning that has already taken place and the reduced likelihood of any major issues compared to a mega-event (which the original framework was designed for). Throughout the interviews, the event organisers suggested that the regular frequency of their events meant that their teams were well drilled in their roles, as Interviewee B states (256-259):

"It's almost just engrained into us, it is what it is, we turn up to the venue everybody knows their roles [COLLEAGUES] know exactly what they've got to do, I know what I've got to do, we've got the timings, we'll set everything out, everything will run exactly as it should."

Another key theme in the questionnaire responses was that the attendees felt an event running smoothly was key to the success of the event. Despite the preparation and planning in the lead to the event, it is on the day that the attendee will see how well the event runs and so it is here where it must be shown by the event team. It is key that the event organiser uses the final logistics plan to run the event smoothly, however it is also key for the event organiser to understand that plans may need to be adapted. If this occurs, it is here where the skill of the event organiser will be most

needed. This will show how effective the contingencies in the event plan has been and how quickly the event organiser can adapt to changing conditions and solve different problems. The data collection highlighted that at this stage the most common issue that arose during events that lead to a change in event plan was a speaker overrunning their allotted time.

At the end of this stage the event will have run and it will be the job of the events team to analyse both internally and externally the successes and failures of the event.

5.3.7 Tier 5 - Legacy

This is the final stage; it is often overlooked but it is here where it can be determined if the event has been a success or not. This phase starts mmediately after the closing speeches have been made.

Shone & Parry (2013) state the value of feedback is massive, with any event it is important to understand the response of the stakeholders to gain an insight of how to improve any future events. This is often forgotten by many event organisers, as Silvers (2008) suggests, activity is all but flat after closure, which can be highly detrimental to future event planning. This relaxed attitude towards the collection of feedback was evident in many of the responses by the interviewees, particularly with Interviewee E (241-242):

"Sometimes, we do, what we do with it is something that I would question, it's all very well collecting it, but you need to do something about it".

During this stage of the process, the event organiser should be looking to collect as much feedback as they can from all stakeholders, predominantly the attendees of the event, but also any other parties such as: exhibitors, speakers and the venue hosts. This is best collected on the day with paper forms as opposed to e-mails after the event, to increase response rate (as suggested by several interviewees) however both methods should still be in operation. The event organiser can then look towards future events and utilise the feedback in preparation for future events, this highlights the cyclical nature of this model. It is also important that the event manager also utilises the event as a public relations tool as part of the larger marketing strategy. This could be something as simple as a news story published on the website of the organisation.

At the end of this stage the analysis of the feedback should then be taken into the start of the planning process for the next event.

6.0 Conclusion

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019) the purpose of the conclusion is to provide a conclusion to the thesis. This section will use data collected and discussed to answer the research question. It will also highlight recommendations from this research that could be utilised in industry and look at any areas for potential future research.

6.1 Research Question

How can business-focused events be used to encourage technology adoption within Small and Medium Enterprises?

Business-focused events can be used to encourage technology adoption within SMEs as they can act as a rich source of knowledge for the individual attending. They can provide detailed information to the latest industry developments and the latest innovations within that sector. Through providing an understanding of the new technologies available this can increase understanding of the relative advantage the new technology can provide. Knowledge transfer is not limited to developing an understanding of a new technology, it can also provide information that can assist in reducing other barriers to technology, through providing solutions to how these can be overcome. Information can be given which relates to potential sources of funding and access to specialist support that is available. Interaction with fellow attendees can also result in knowledge transfer. Increasing knowledge levels and interaction with other attendees are two of the primary motivations for business event attendance, so this should ensure that those who attend are keen to learn and interact.

The success of business-focused events is very much determined by the strength of the organising team. It is important that the event organiser understands the objectives of their organisation and what the requirements of the attendee are. This can influence the design of the event features such as: the length of the event, the facilitation of contact development and the method in which the information is transferred. These factors can determine levels of knowledge transfer that take place within an event, which in turn can affect the decision of an organisation to adopt new technology. The extent to which business-focused events can encourage technology adoption within SMEs ultimately depend upon the ability on the event organiser to run an event that successfully encourages knowledge transfer.

6.2 Research Objective 1

Develop an understanding of the characteristics commonly associated with Small and Medium Enterprises and how these can act as barriers to technology adoption.

To understand the importance of technology adoption within SMEs this thesis highlights the idea in both academic theory and by those working in SMEs. Data collected in the literature review suggests that the adoption of a new technology can allow a company to increase their organisational capabilities. This means that if utilised correctly, this can then increase the competitiveness of an SME, something which is increasingly important in an expanding global market. This view was re-enforced during the data collection phase, whereby multiple respondents in the survey suggested that one of their primary motivations for attending events was to learn new information regarding the latest technological updates in their sector.

This thesis highlights three main barriers to technology adoption. The first barrier is knowledge gaps meaning individuals are often unaware of the latest technologies and do not understand the relative advantage they can provide. The second barrier is the financial constraints which often hamper the adoption of new technologies, not only the initial high purchase costs but also those associated with training and maintenance. The third barrier is that many SMEs do not have the time necessary to fully understand and implement a technology to ensure it is utilised correctly. Although the data collection did not directly address this objective, opinions from both phases of data collection highlights these as barriers.

6.3 Research Objective 2

Assess the key elements that a Small and Medium Enterprise would like to gain from attending an event.

This thesis shows that those who work within SMEs want the outcome of an event to 'add value' to their organisation. This is in two forms; knowledge development and contact development. Knowledge development is key, the attendees surveyed often wanted to develop their knowledge in relation to the topic(s) that were being discussed. Contact development, often involved the surveyed attendees increasing their number of business contacts at an event which could result in benefits such as new working relationships and new ideas.

6.4 Research Objective 3

Develop an insight into the organisation involved in a successful event for Small and Medium Enterprises.

The definition of 'a successful event' is dependent on the stakeholder on which it applies to. For the attendee it is 'added value' at a smooth and succinct event. Event Organisers often look at success in relation to the organisational objectives. A framework which can be used to develop a successful business event aimed at SMEs was produced.

6.5 Recommendations

It is important in this section to highlight how the research can be used by those organisations that supply new technologies and by event organisers. Through an analysis of key findings in this thesis, a myriad of technology providers, whether it is technology developers or intermediaries, can recognise and understand the problems that SMEs can face in adopting new technologies. This can allow them to develop different strategies to help reduce the size of those barriers for SMEs. It is also important to understand from a supply point of view, that demand for new technology is high within SMEs, despite barriers they can face.

For an event organiser, the framework developed can provide a platform upon which a successful event for SMEs can be based. The framework provides a step-by-step guide, with recommendations on what would be suitable for an audience of SMEs, so they are able to tailor their event to match. This will ensure that their events are both well attended and attended by individuals who are willing to engage and participate, who find the event beneficial. The recommendations in the framework originated from suggestions of both current event organisers and those who regularly attend events. This helped to highlight the elements that made regular successful events and ideas on how these can be improved in the future.

6.6 Further Research

This section will aim to provide ways in which the outcomes of this research could be tested in the future. This research could involve utilising the framework developed, in this thesis, in the organisation of a long-term series of events, specifically for SMEs. The results would allow for a comparative analysis to take place of the events both before and after the framework has been put in place. To ultimately test the success of the framework, data could be collected from both series of events, and the quantitative analysis could focus on areas such as attendee numbers and attendee satisfaction (if collected using quantitative methods), whilst qualitative data could be derived from the verbal feedback of the attendees and the personal opinions of the event organiser.

Another idea for further research could be based using the methodology from this thesis in a different context, for example a different type of attendee. If the collection of primary data was taken from those events organisers who organise events for those who work for larger firms and from those who are employed by large firms, this would provide alternate data which could then be compared against the original study. A comparative analysis would highlight the extent to which attendance motivations can differ based upon the organisation that the individual is a part of.

A final suggestion for further research would be to explore the impact of COVID-19 and how it has changed the landscape for SMEs in relation to technology adoption. It will be vital, for technology suppliers and intermediaries to revisit the barriers to technology that SMEs will face to see if/ how they have changed and subsequently how they can be overcome. Additional research based upon the impact of COVID-19 could examine how it has impacted the events industry, particularly for event organisers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Analysis of SBTAM Model (Peltier, Zhao & Schibrowsky, 2012)

Factor	Description
Market Uncertainty	This factor analyses the current state of the market that the company is operating within. This study suggests that individuals are more likely to make the decision to adopt technology when there is uncertainty in the market as the perceived advantage of adopting the technology will be greater.
Environmental hostility	This factor analyses the current environment that the company is in and the behaviour of their competitors. The findings suggested that SMEs operating within a hostile environment were more likely to adopt new technologies to provide them with a competitive advantage.
Attitude toward change	This factor looks at the key decision makers willingness to adopt new technologies within their business. A positive attitude towards change in this instance led to a greater chance of the adoption of a new technology.
Age	This looked at how the age of a key decision maker impacted the decision to adopt a new technology. In this instance there was no significant impact noted on technology adoption, however age did have a negative impact on the product class knowledge of the individual.
Education	This looks at the level of education that the individual has achieved. The level of education impacted the likelihood to adopt new technology and the product class knowledge of the key individual.
Product class knowledge	In this instance product class refers to the understanding of the advantages that the technology can bring and an understanding of the perceived switching costs. This factor looks at how this will impact their decision whether to adopt the new technology. In this study, this element was described as having a major impact on the adoption of technology. It was found that an increase product class knowledge had a direct positive impact on the adoption of new technologies and increased the key decision makers perception of the overall advantage that it would bring.
Switching costs	This factor looks at how the perceived costs of adopting the new technology effect the decision to adopt a new technology.

	In this research it was found that the switching costs, although unlikely to affect the direct to decision to adopt technology was highly likely to have a negative impact on the individuals perceived advantage of adopting the new technology
Relative advantage	This refers to the extent to which a new technology can improve goods or services that are currently offered by the business or the competition. The study found that this was the key driving force in the adoption of new technology, this was predominantly due to the many interrelationships that this factor had with other variables in the model.

Appendix 2 Question Feedback Analysis

Original	Issue	Change
Interviewee Background **Event Content** **Event Aesthetics** **Post Event Analysis**	These sections of the interview that the questions were aiming to explore were not related as closely to the chosen theory. Basing questions directly upon the framework, provided the interview with a logical pathway, from the beginning of the process to the end.	**Objectives** **Planning** **Preparation** **Implementation** **Legacy**
Could you provide a brief description of the organisation that you work for? Could you provide a quick overview of the type of events that you run?	These questions were deemed unnecessary as the researcher will already be aware of the answers. These questions were removed from the interview.	N/A
What is the main method of content delivery in your events? • Speeches • Workshops • Q&A	As the researcher was providing prompts to the interviewee these questions were leading and could therefore could have resulted in bias. To remove the potential for bias, the prompts were removed from the question.	What is the main method of content delivery in your events?

Appendix 3 Interview Questions and Analysis

Interview Questions

The Planning Process for Events developed by Shone & Parry (2013) was the foundation for the interview questions. The questions were based upon the stages of the planning process in the framework and the questions based upon the actions which were recommended to be taken. Specific tasks were not asked as part of the interview as the researcher felt they would not be of relevance with regards to organising events for SMEs, this understanding was developed from the researchers own experience. As with the framework the questions related to the planning are given the most emphasis and therefore have the most academic theory placed upon them. The below shows the questions that were asked, and have theory related to that question or area of questioning. As the framework was developed by Shone & Parry (2013) much of the theory behind each area will revolve around that suggested by the authors.

Objectives

   1) *What are the main reasons why you run these events?*

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) suggest that motivations behind organising events differ depending on the organisation that is running them.

Question Analysis: Insight into the reasons why the successful events that the event organisers plan are run.

   2) *Are there any specific obligations for you to run your events?*

Question Analysis: Determine if there were any organisational or contractual obligations for the event organiser to plan and run events and how in any way these affected the planning process.

   3) *How would you define a successful event?*

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) state that the levels of success and how success is defined is dependent on the stakeholder and therefore can have multiple meanings.

Question Analysis: Provide an insight into the stakeholder view that the organiser takes and how that stakeholder would define a successful event.

Planning – Draft Outline Plan

Environmental Search

   4) *Do you have a calendar of other similar events?*

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) suggest that having a structured event can massively assist in the planning process for that event and in the planning of future events

Question Analysis: An understanding of if the event organiser has multiple events planned and how far in advance this is done. This will also assist in the time scales applied to the developed framework.

5) Do you have any "competitors" that run similar events?

Theory: Zajac & Bazerman (1991) state it is important to for an organisation to understand the environment that they are working in.

Question Analysis: Aim to test the awareness of the organiser with regards to other similar events/ organisations and what they do to counteract the potential negative impacts competition can have.

Information Gathering

6) What would you say is the most suitable day to hold an event on?

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) state that the date and time of an event is hugely important as it can either help or hinder numbers of attendees.

Question Analysis: Highlight what days the event organisers feel are best for SMEs; this information can be applied to the modified framework.

7) When would you say is the most suitable time day to hold an event on?

Question Analysis: Highlight what time the event organisers feel are best for SMEs; this information can be applied to the modified framework.

8) What would you say is the most suitable time of year to hold an event on?

Question Analysis: Highlight what time of year the event organisers feel are best for SMEs; this information can be applied to the modified framework.

9) What are the features that you look for in a venue?

Theory: Siu, Wan, & Dong (2012) state that features of a venue can either positively or negatively affect the satisfaction level of the attendees.

Question Analysis: An understanding of what the event organiser states are the most important features they look for in a venue and which they believe will be of most importance to the attendees.

10) How many staff (if any) do you have available to plan/ run these events?

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) state that it is vital that resources are used to their maximum efficiency.

Question Analysis: Highlights level of staffing resources that the event organiser has at their disposal and how they are utilised.

Planning – Systematic Detailed Planning

Financial Planning

11) Do you have a budget to run these events?

Theory: Pielichaty, Els, Reed & Mawer (2017) state that financial planning is key to the successful planning of an event, it allows the organiser to understand what they can and cannot do.

Question Analysis: Inquire as to the level of financial planning that the event organiser has in place and how this impacts their planning of an event.

12) Do you charge the attendees?

Theory: Aren & SIbindi (2014) state SMEs commonly place a high amount of importance of a healthy cash flow.

Question Analysis: Looks at if the event organiser charges for events and how (if at all) this impacts event attendance figures.

Operation Planning

13) What is the main method of content delivery in your events?

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) state that content delivery is key to the attendees understanding of the content of an event.

Question Analysis: Gain an insight into the methods that the organisers use and how successful they believe it to be.

14) Does the content of your events follow on from the previous events?

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) suggest that there are benefits to running events as a series but that often these can often be tricky to run and attendance can be poor.

Question Analysis: Asking if the event organisers run events as part of a series and if so, how successful they are.

15) Do you include a networking period at some point during the event?

Theory: Lee (2016) states that the importance of networking for an SME cannot be underestimated and is a key motivation for an SME attending an event.

Question Analysis: Understanding the extent to which networking is seen as an important part of the overall event according to the event organiser and understanding how the structure of the event is modified to show this.

16) Do you ever use related exhibitors at your events?

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) suggest that using related exhibitors at an event can be useful for both the organiser and the attendee.

Question Analysis: Discovering if event organisers use related exhibitions at their events and if so, how are they used.

Marketing Plan

17) How do you ensure (as much as possible) that there is the demand for your events?

Theory: According to Smith (2007) for a successful event to take place there must be enough demand from the business community.

Question Analysis: Provide an insight as to how the organiser develops an understanding of if there is a demand for an event on a particular topic.

18) How long before the event will you start the marketing campaign?

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) state that the timing of a marketing campaign is critical to its success.

Question Analysis: Discover how long before the event an event organiser would typically start a marketing campaign.

19) What is your most common form of marketing for events?

Theory: Reic (2016) suggests that the selected marketing method(s) can have a significant impact on those who see the message.

Question Analysis: Understanding the channels that the event organiser uses to spread the marketing messages and how effective they believe each channel is.

Preparation

Theory: Shone & Parry (2013) state the importance of the attendees understanding of how to register for an event, it can help the event organiser gain an idea of the potential numbers and prepare accordingly.

20) How do attendees register to attend the event?

Question Analysis: Aim to see the how the event organiser registers attendees on to events and analyse what it the most utilised method.

21) How long before the event do attendees typically register?

Question Analysis: Exploring when the attendees are likely to register before the event and how the event organiser reacts to this.

22) How often are you likely to send out reminders about the event beforehand?

Question Analysis: Understanding the answer to the previous question will let the event organiser discuss their strategies for sending out reminders.

Implementation

Theory: According to Bladen, Kennell, Abdson & Wilde (2012) contingency planning is a vital part of event management and to ensure that all potential problems are analysed beforehand a contingency plan must be developed.

23) As a percentage what would you suggest the dropout rate usually stands at?

Question Analysis: Highlighting how many individuals that have registered will usually not turn up aids in the development of a contingency plan.

24) How many unregistered people are likely to turn up?

Question Analysis: Highlighting how many individuals that have not registered will usually turn up aids in the development of a contingency plan.

25) How likely are you/ your team to stick to the event plan during the event?

Question Analysis: Understanding how likely the event organiser is to stick to the overall event plan during the event, this will also allow an insight into areas that could potentially cause issues during the event.

Legacy

Theory: As Shone & Parry (2013) state the collection and implementation of feedback within the events industry is often neglected and that this is an area that many event organisers could improve their own skills on.

26) Do you collect feedback from attendees post event?

Question Analysis: Aim to see if the event organiser has any form of legacy planning in place and if they do, look at how this is implemented.

27) How do you collect this information?

Theory: Silvers (2008) suggests that the method of which feedback is collected can massively impact the volume of data that is collected.

Question Analysis: Exploring how the organiser collects the information and what methods they believe to be the most effective.

28) How do you utilise the feedback to improve your events?

Question Analysis: Analyse how the feedback collected is then implemented for any future events.

29) Do you provide feedback to the venue?

Question Analysis: Discuss if the event organiser provides feedback to the venue that they have used.

30) How effective do you believe your events have been?

Question Analysis: Linking back to question 3 and the attempt to gain an insight as to the definition of a successful event, the event organiser can provide an analysis of the events that they have already run and how successful they believe them to have been.

Appendix 4 Questionnaire Pilot Feedback

Original	Issue	Change
What would be your preferred day to attend an event? What would be your preferred time to attend an event?	Pilot respondents stated that the original questions left them unsure if they could select more than one answer. To address this, under every question in the questionnaire, the researcher highlighted the number of choices the respondent was allowed.	What would be your preferred day to attend an event? (You may choose multiple answers) What would be your preferred time to attend an event? (You may choose multiple answers)
You are being invited to take part in a survey for research looking at the planning and managing of a series of events targeted at Small Medium Enterprises	One pilot respondent stated that they were unsure if the survey was only for Event Managers as the original description did not add much detail. To solve this, the additional text helped the respondent recognise that they were an employee of an SME.	You are being invited to take part in a questionnaire for research looking in at the planning and managing of a series of events targeted at Small Medium Enterprises, by completing this you are confirming that you are employed by an organisation that is classified as a Small Medium Enterprise.

Appendix 5 Interview E-mail

Dear **[INTERVIEWEE],**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview looking at the organisation of events for SME's as part of my research for a MA by Research at the University of Huddersfield.

The interview is scheduled for **[DATE]** at **[TIME].**

You will find attached to this e-mail the following:

- Information Form – This provides a background to the purpose of the study and more information regarding the interview.
- Interview Consent Form – This will need to be completed before the interview takes place, I will bring a blank copy of this to the interview.
- Interview Questions – This is a list of the core questions that I will be asking during the interview.

If you have any questions, please contact me as soon as possible and I will be more than happy to help.

Thanks

Jordan Furness BA (Hons)

University of Huddersfield - Post Graduate Researcher

Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a study about planning and managing a series of events targeted at Small Medium Enterprises. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?
The purpose of this study is to improve utilisation rates of technology within Technology and Innovation Centres by Small Medium Enterprises (SME's).

Why I have been approached?
You have been asked to participate because of your level of experience and expertise in running successful business events.

Do I have to take part?
It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect you.

What will I need to do?
If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to take part in a recorded 30 minute interview focusing on event organising.

Will my identity be disclosed?
All information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential, unless you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, in which case I would need to pass this information to the appropriate authorities.

What will happen to the information?
All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

Who can I contact for further information?
If you require any further information about the research, please contact me on:

Jordan Furness
j.furness2@hud.ac.uk
01484 505632

Version 1 – 08/07/19

Appendix 7 Interview Consent Form

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this study as outlined in the information sheet Version 1 - 08/07/19.	☐
I consent to taking part in this the study.	☐
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research until the final draft of this research is submitted. This can be done by contacting the researcher and informing them of your wish to withdraw.	☐
I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym).	☐
I understand that the information collected will be in kept secure conditions for a period of 10 years at the University of Huddersfield.	☐
I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided.	☐
I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report.	☐

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant:	Signature of Researcher:
_____	_____
Print:	Print:
_____	_____
Date:	Date:
_____	_____

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Appendix 8 Ethics Approval Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
Business School Research Ethics Committee

POSTGRADATE RESEARCH STUDENT ETHICAL REVIEW FORM

Please complete and return via email to alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk along with the required documents (shown below).

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT

Before completing this section please refer to the Business School Research Ethics web pages which can be found under Resources on the Unilearn site (Ethics Policies and Procedures). Applicants should consult the appropriate ethical guidelines.

Please ensure that the statements in Section C are completed by the applicant (and supervisor for PGR students) prior to submission.

Researcher(s) details	Jordan Furness – u1152239
Project title	Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.
Award (where applicable)	MA by Research (Business School)
Supervisor details (where applicable)	Dr Briony Sharp/ Janna Wood
Project start date	17/09/2018

SECTION B: PROJECT OUTLINE (TO BE COMPLETED IN FULL BY THE APPLICANT)

Issue	Please provide sufficient detail for your supervisor to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal. Forms with insufficient detail will need to be resubmitted.
Aims and objectives of the study. Please state the aims and objectives of the study.	Aim • Improve utilisation rates of 3M Buckley Innovation Centre technology by Small Medium Enterprises (SME's). Objectives • Provide a greater understanding of technology adoption theory within SMEs. • Understand consumer motivations around attending business facing events. • Design an events programme based upon the information gathered during the research.
Brief overview of research methodology The methodology only needs to be explained in sufficient detail to show the approach used (e.g. survey) and explain the research methods to be used during the study.	• Face-to-face Interviews • Survey (online/ face-to-face)
Does your study require any permissions for study? If so, please give details	The management team at the 3M Buckley Innovation Centre will allow access to data from previous events.
Participants Please outline who will participate in your research. Might any of the participants be considered 'vulnerable' (e.g. children)	Current event organisers will participate in face-to-face interviews, this will provide an idea of what is currently taking place in industry. No participants can be considered as vulnerable.

	Employees of SMEs and SME owners will participate in the online or face-to face surveys (at specific events) this will give an insight in to what the consumer is looking for.
Access to participants Please give details about how participants will be identified and contacted.	Event Organisers: These have been identified through connections of the supervisor and other members of 3M BIC staff. Employees of SMEs and SME owners: Convenience sampling will be used, the researcher will send out the survey to those who attend 3M BIC events (post event) and 3M BIC tenants/ network members.
How will your data be recorded and stored?	All data collected, recordings and transcripts will be stored on a password protected PC. The research conforms to the latest version (Dec 2017) of the University of Huddersfield Research Data Management Policy.
Informed consent. Please explain how you will inform your participants about the study and whether they will be in a position to give informed consent.	For all participants the study will be explained thoroughly, its aims and objectives will be made clear. Event Organisers: A participant consent form will be provided to be signed. Employees of SMEs and SME owners: The study will be explained at the onset of the survey, whereby consent will be confirmed by the participant.
Right to withdraw Please identify whether you are offering your participants a right to withdraw from the study and/or to withdraw their data from the study and how this will take place. If you are not offering a right to withdraw, please explain why.	Event Organisers: The offer to withdraw their data will be available up until the final draft is submitted, this will be made clear on the consent. Employees of SMEs and SME owners: The offer to withdraw their data will be available until the point at which the result are anonymised, this will be made clear on the survey. In both instances those wishing to withdraw should contact the researcher via e-mail to J.Furness2@hud.ac.uk.
Confidentiality Please outline the level of confidentiality you will offer respondents and how this will be respected. You should also outline about who will have access to the data and how it will be stored. (This information should be included on Information your information sheet.)	All data collected will be stored on a password protected PC, recordings will be taken on a mobile but will be deleted once transferred on to PC. Only the researcher will have access to the data.
Anonymity If you offer your participants anonymity, please indicate how this will be achieved.	Event Organisers: No interviewees will be named directly and will be simply referred to by the type of organisation that they work for (for example; Interviewee A from a Multi-national Organisation). Employees of SMEs and SME owners: Any data collected will be collated together, individual respondents will not be named.
Harm Please outline your assessment of the extent to which your research might induce psychological stress, anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants (beyond the	No risks will be taken outside the risks encountered in normal life therefore no harm will be caused through this research.

risks encountered in normal life). If more than minimal risk, you should outline what support there will be for participants. If you believe that that there is minimal likely harm, please articulate why you believe this to be so.	

Retrospective applications. If your application for Ethics approval is retrospective, please explain why this has arisen.

N/A

SECTION C – SUMMARY OF ETHICAL ISSUES

Please give a summary of the ethical issues and any action that will be taken to address the issue(s).

Interviews: Participants will be selected by the researcher, in the research they will not be referred to by their name and no personal information will be used. They will be made aware of the purpose of the research prior to participating. They will have the right to withdraw at any time prior to the final submission. Surveys: No personal information will be required as part of the questionnaire, they will be notified of the purpose and scope of the research and will be required to consent prior to taking part. They will have the option to withdraw at any time prior to the final submission.

SECTION D – ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT)
Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy.

I have included the following documents

Information sheet	Yes	X	Not applicable ☐
Consent form	Yes	X	Not applicable ☐
Letters	Yes		Not applicable ☐
Questionnaire	Yes		Not applicable ☐
Interview schedule	Yes		Not applicable ☐

SECTION E – STATEMENT BY APPLICANT

I confirm that the information I have given in this form on ethical issues is correct.

Affirmation by Supervisor (where applicable)
I can confirm that, to the best of my understanding, the information presented by the applicant is correct and appropriate to allow an informed judgement on whether further ethical approval is required

Supervisor name/signature: Janna Wood

Date: 10/07/2019

Name of applicant: Jordan Furness

Date: 10/07/2019

All documentation must be submitted electronically to the Business School Research Ethics Committee Administrator, Alex Thompson, at alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk.

All proposals will be reviewed by two members of BSREC. If it is considered necessary to discuss the proposal with the full Committee, the applicant (and their supervisor if the applicant is a student) will be invited to attend the next Ethics Committee meeting.

If you have any queries relating to the completion of this form or any other queries relating to the Business School's Research Ethics Committee in consideration of this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair, Dr Eleanor Davies (e.davies@hud.ac.uk) ☎ [47] 2121 or the Administrator Alex Thomson (alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk) ☎ [47] 2529

Modified 13/6/12

Appendix 9 Reviewer Proforma #1

The University Of Huddersfield
Business School Research Ethics Committee

Reviewer Proforma

Project Title:	Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.
Name of researcher (s):	Jordan Michael Furness
Supervisor (where appropriate):	Briony Sharp Janna Wood
Reviewer name	Dr Dinula B. Herath
Date sent to reviewer	11/07/19
Target date for review	25/07/19

Issue	Advice / Comments to applicant
Aim / objectives of the study	
Research methodology	
Permissions for study?	
Participants	
Access to participants	
How will your data be recorded and stored?	Please add clear reference to the university research data management policy and mention if your study conforms to these.
Confidentiality	
Anonymity	
Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants (beyond the risks encountered in normal life).	
Retrospective applications	
Supporting documents (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule, letters etc)	
Other comments	

OVERALL RESPONSE

APPROVE	
APPROVE SUBJECT TO RECOMMENDATIONS [please specify]	

APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS [please specify]	1. Clearly articulate how exactly a participant can inform the researchers about their intention to withdraw from the study in the concent form and in the information sheet.
	    a. Who to contact
	    b. Through which format/channel
	
	2. Please add clear reference to the university research data management policy and mention if your study conforms to these.

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED [please specify]	
REJECT [please specify reasons]	

Reviewer name Dr Dinuka B. Herath

Date   25/07/2019

Please send review to Business School Research Ethics Committee, Alex Thompson (alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk).

Appendix 10 Reviewer Proforma #2

The University Of Huddersfield
Business School Research Ethics Committee

Reviewer Proforma

Project Title:	Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.
Name of researcher (s):	Jordan Michael Furness
Supervisor (where appropriate):	Briony Sharp Janna Wood
Reviewer name	S Swailes
Date sent to reviewer	11/07/19
Target date for review	25/07/19

Issue	Advice / Comments to applicant
Aim / objectives of the study	
Research methodology	
Permissions for study?	
Participants	
Access to participants	
How will your data be recorded and stored?	
Confidentiality	
Anonymity	
Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants (beyond the risks encountered in normal life).	
Retrospective applications	
Supporting documents (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule, letters etc)	
Other comments	

OVERALL RESPONSE

APPROVE	Yes
APPROVE SUBJECT TO RECOMMENDATIONS [please specify]	
APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS [please specify]	
FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED [please specify]	
REJECT [please specify reasons]	

Reviewer name S Swailes

Date   22/7/19

Please send review to Business School Research Ethics Committee, Alex Thompson (alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk).

Appendix 11 Amendment E-mail

From: Alex Thompson █████████████
Sent: 26 July 2019 13:39
To: Jordan Furness (Researcher) ████████████
Cc: Alper Kara ██████████ BusinessSchool PGR Support ████████████ Briony Sharp ██████████ Janna Wood ████████████
Subject: RE: Ethics Form Submission ██████████

Dear Jordan,

I have been asked to forward the following to you:

Following consideration of the two reports from the reviewers, the decision is APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.

The conditions are as follows:

1. The applicant should clearly articulate how exactly a participant can inform the researchers about their intention to withdraw from the study in the consent form and in the information sheet (Who are they going to contact and through which format/channel).

2. Add clear reference to the university research data management policy and mention if the study conforms to these.

Please send your response to Alex Thompson.

Kind regards,

Professor Alper Kara
Chair of the Business School Research Ethics Committee

Attached are the comment forms from the Reviewers.

Kind regards,

Alex Thompson

Appendix 12 Updated Ethics Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
Business School Research Ethics Committee

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT ETHICAL REVIEW FORM

Please complete and return via email to alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk along with the required documents (shown below).

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT

Before completing this section please refer to the Business School Research Ethics web pages which can be found under Resources on the Unilearn site (Ethics Policies and Procedures). Applicants should consult the appropriate ethical guidelines.

Please ensure that the statements in Section C are completed by the applicant (and supervisor for PGR students) prior to submission.

Researcher(s) details	Jordan Furness – u1152239
Project title	Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.
Award (where applicable)	MA by Research (Business School)
Supervisor details (where applicable)	Dr Briony Sharp/ Janna Wood
Project start date	17/09/2018

SECTION B: PROJECT OUTLINE (TO BE COMPLETED IN FULL BY THE APPLICANT)

Issue	Please provide sufficient detail for your supervisor to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal. Forms with insufficient detail will need to be resubmitted.
Aims and objectives of the study. Please state the aims and objectives of the study.	Aim • Improve utilisation rates of 3M Buckley Innovation Centre technology by Small Medium Enterprises (SME's). Objectives • Provide a greater understanding of technology adoption theory within SMEs. • Understand consumer motivations around attending business facing events. • Design an events programme based upon the information gathered during the research.
Brief overview of research methodology The methodology only needs to be explained in sufficient detail to show the approach used (e.g. survey) and explain the research methods to be used during the study.	• Face-to-face Interviews • Survey (online/ face-to-face)
Does your study require any permissions for study? If so, please give details	The management team at the 3M Buckley Innovation Centre will allow access to data from previous events.
Participants Please outline who will participate in your research. Might any of the participants be considered 'vulnerable' (e.g. children)	Current event organisers will participate in face-to-face interviews, this will provide an idea of what is currently taking place in industry. No participants can be considered as vulnerable.

	Employees of SMEs and SME owners will participate in the online or face-to face surveys (at specific events) this will give an insight in to what the consumer is looking for.
Access to participants Please give details about how participants will be identified and contacted.	Event Organisers: These have been identified through connections of the supervisor and other members of 3M BIC staff. Employees of SMEs and SME owners: Convenience sampling will be used, the researcher will send out the survey to those who attend 3M BIC events (post event) and 3M BIC tenants/ network members.
How will your data be recorded and stored?	All data collected, recordings and transcripts will be stored on a password protected PC. The research conforms to the latest version (Dec 2017) of the University of Huddersfield Research Data Management Policy.
Informed consent. Please explain how you will inform your participants about the study and whether they will be in a position to give informed consent.	For all participants the study will be explained thoroughly, its aims and objectives will be made clear. Event Organisers: A participant consent form will be provided to be signed. Employees of SMEs and SME owners: The study will be explained at the onset of the survey, whereby consent will be confirmed by the participant.
Right to withdraw Please identify whether you are offering your participants a right to withdraw from the study and/or to withdraw their data from the study and how this will take place. If you are not offering a right to withdraw, please explain why.	Event Organisers: The offer to withdraw their data will be available up until the final draft is submitted, this will be made clear on the consent. Employees of SMEs and SME owners: The offer to withdraw their data will be available until the point at which the result are anonymised, this will be made clear on the survey. In both instances those wishing to withdraw should contact the researcher via e-mail to J.Furness2@hud.ac.uk.
Confidentiality Please outline the level of confidentiality you will offer respondents and how this will be respected. You should also outline about who will have access to the data and how it will be stored. (This information should be included on Information your information sheet.)	All data collected will be stored on a password protected PC, recordings will be taken on a mobile but will be deleted once transferred on to PC. Only the researcher will have access to the data.
Anonymity If you offer your participants anonymity, please indicate how this will be achieved.	Event Organisers: No interviewees will be named directly and will be simply referred to by the type of organisation that they work for (for example; Interviewee A from a Multi-national Organisation). Employees of SMEs and SME owners: Any data collected will be collated together, individual respondents will not be named.
Harm Please outline your assessment of the extent to which your research might induce psychological stress, anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants (beyond the	No risks will be taken outside the risks encountered in normal life therefore no harm will be caused through this research.

risks encountered in normal life). If more than minimal risk, you should outline what support there will be for participants. If you believe that that there is minimal likely harm, please articulate why you believe this to be so.	

Retrospective applications. If your application for Ethics approval is retrospective, please explain why this has arisen.

N/A

SECTION C – SUMMARY OF ETHICAL ISSUES

Please give a summary of the ethical issues and any action that will be taken to address the issue(s).

Interviews: Participants will be selected by the researcher, in the research they will not be referred to by their name and no personal information will be used. They will be made aware of the purpose of the research prior to participating. They will have the right to withdraw at any time prior to the final submission.

Surveys: No personal information will be required as part of the questionnaire, they will be notified of the purpose and scope of the research and will be required to consent prior to taking part. They will have the option to withdraw at any time prior to the final submission.

SECTION D – ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT)

Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy.

I have included the following documents

Information sheet	Yes	X	Not applicable ☐
Consent form	Yes	X	Not applicable ☐
Letters	Yes		Not applicable ☐
Questionnaire	Yes		Not applicable ☐
Interview schedule	Yes		Not applicable ☐

Appendix 13 Approval E-mail

From: Alex Thompson ███████████████████
Sent: 06 September 2019 11:41
To: Jordan Furness (Researcher) ████████████████████
Cc: Alper Kara ██████████████   Briony Sharp █████████████   Janna Wood ████████████████
BusinessSchool PGR Support ███████████████
Subject: FW: Ethics Form Submission - ████████████████

Dear Jordan,

Apologies for the delay, I have been asked to forward the following to you:

> Thank you for your response to the Business School Research Ethics Committee. I confirm that your application is now approved.
>
> Professor Alper Kara
> Chair of the Business School Research Ethics Committee

Kind regards,

Alex Thompson

Appendix 14 Interview Transcription: Interviewee A

JF	001	What are the main reasons that you run your events?
IA	002 003	Do you mean the main reasons now or before we started them, because I think that our view on why we run events has morphed over time?
JF	004	I would say initially
IA	005 006	Initially, no real reason it just seemed like a good thing to do as part of our remit for SME engagement
JF	007	So were there any specific obligations for you to be doing that or was it just a case of….
IA	008 009	Blank sheet of paper, just that we wanted to create a community of SMEs who felt positive about [ORGANISATION]
JF	010 011	Interesting, so how would you define a successful event, what does a successful event look like?
IA	012 013 014 015 016 017 018 019 020 021	Well it depends on which perspective on which you look at it, so [ORGANISATION] has different ways of looking at the same activity, so it started initially as a Science-cum-strategy activity and looking at it from a scientific and strategic perspective it was about building recognition of [ORGANISATION] within the region, if you're a member of the commercial directorate and tasked with generating commercial revenue, then you look at it differently and you look at it as a very clear return on investment and does the time/ cash/ money spent on the activity generate commercial revenue. So, we started at strategic and scientific, we had a re-organisation mid-2018, internally people started to decide themselves that this was a success and then wanted to overlay their own success criteria on top of it.
JF	022	Would you say that it has become too successful then?
IA	023 024	It's now at a level where people recognise that it exists internally, people are seeing it as a success and are then wanting to manipulate it for their own particular reasons.
JF	025 026	That's interesting, is there a calendar of events that you run or are they all individual from each other?
IA	027 028 029 030 031 032 033	We have four themes: strategy, production, innovation and skills. Four headline themes and then we on an event by event basis decide which of those four strategic headings, a particular workshop would fit under and then in consultation with our steering committee, including external representation from local SMEs, we decide what the theme will be for the event and then once the theme has been set we meet internally to decide who the speakers will be under any particular overarching theme on what the presentation should be.
JF	034	Is there always the same presence with the SME?
IA	035 036 037 038	We try to keep three different perspectives in the planning process: SME, a large business and an academic-cum-scientific perspective, all look at the same problem from different angles, but the academic and scientific aspect is always pitched at an SME understandable level.
JF	039	Do you know of any competitors who run similar events in the local area?
IA	040 041 042 043 045 046 047 048 049	I would say they were all rubbish by comparison with ours because I feel they are, well that's unfair, they're much more established than us but either have a direct commercial objective or they are more of an old boys club in my view, which fills a different market sector, the old boys club we don't have a problem with because that fills a gap in the local economy, the out and out commercial activity is counter to way that we operate, this is not a direct money making venture, it is an activity which is intended to demonstrate [ORGANISTAION] thought leadership position and raise awareness within the local community, but yes there are a number of indirect competitors, not direct I would argue, they might not see it in the same terms though.

JF	050	Just looking at the actual planning of the event, what would be the most suitable event
	051	to hold a day on?
IA	052	It's Tuesday, it's always the second Tuesday of the month, or typically the second
	053	Tuesday of every month, it's not a Monday, it's not a Friday, I don't really know why
	054	but we just picked Tuesday and that's now become the way we do it.
JF	055	What about the time: morning, afternoon, evening?
IA	056	We've decided evening, we always done in the evening, we did in the initial feedback
	057	questionnaires ask which time of day they preferred, the majority preferred evening, a
	058	number of people preferred breakfast events and a couple of weirdos wanted it right
	059	slap bang in the middle of the day, so we ignored the weirdos.
JF	060	The feedback that you got from the people that wanted the morning, do they come to
	070	the evening ones?
IA	071	I can't remember if I'm honest, but we ignored them because it wouldn't fit the car
	072	parking opportunities at [VENUE].
JF	073	What would you say was the most suitable time of year to hold the events?
IA	074	We hold four events throughout the year, equally spaced, we avoid August, we avoid
	075	December certainly the Christmas and New Year period, we try to make sure we don't
	076	clash with school holidays and public holidays, we try to make sure we don't clash with
	077	other local events [COMPETITOR] is the one that is the sort of direct competitor but we
	078	try not to go head to head with them as it would be pointless, but yeah by and large we
	079	just do our own thing.
JF	080	When you're looking for a venue do you always stick to the same ones or do you go to
	081	different venues?
IA	082	We've only used four venues, everyone that's been in West Yorkshire has been at the
	083	3M BIC, when we've done them in partnership with [UNIVERSITY PARTNER] in
	084	[LOCATION] we have had one at [VENUE] and the second one at [UNIVERSITY
	085	PARTNER] itself, we've had one in the [LOCATION] at the [UNIVERSITY PARTNER] and
	086	we are planning events in [LOCATION] with [PARTNER ORGANISATION], we're planning
	087	one at [LOCATION] with [PARTNER ORGANISATION], I think once we have found a
	088	venue that works we will stick with it. The only problem with the [VENUE] is that
	089	[LOCATION] is not easy to get in and out of and the car parking isn't good, the change
	090	of times in parking did create a bump in the road for us.
JF	091	What would you say are the reasons for selecting the places that you do?
IA	092	So these events are run alongside [PARTNER UNIVERSITY] under the auspice of the
	093	[PROJECT PARTNER] so whilst [ORGANISATION] does 90% of the work, it was under the
	094	understanding that once the [PROGRAMME PARTNER] was up and running and they
	095	are running their events, [ORGANISATION] will get a free ride on the back of these
	096	events, you know the only negative with this place is the car parking but by having it
	097	here we can showcase [ORGANISATION] capability, we have the relationship with the
	098	University so we have the opportunity to showcase University capability, easy access to
	099	University academics to give them a platform to talk about their area of research, we're
	100	having a MedTech event our first event MedTech event ever, our preference was to
	101	hold it at [VENUE], but that proved to be too time consuming of a process to get
	102	approval, so we just couldn't be bothered, decided we'd do it here but being honest
	103	the preference was to have that at [VENUE], just because the [UNIVERSITY PARTNER]
	104	has a reputation in MedTech.
JF	105	How many staff do you have to plan and run the events?
IA	106	We have five people who get involved in the planning and running and then we have a
	107	steering committee with four external SMEs and on that steering committee the
	108	University is represented by [JOB ROLE], who sometimes turns up, who then grumbles
	109	when he doesn't have his say.

JF	110	Do you have a budget to run these events?
IA	111	Good question! No not as a defined budget we have very little out of the door cash
	112	costs for these events, so we have an external sponsor who sponsors and covers the
	113	cost of the catering, the University did share the cost of the room with us but that
	114	seems to have changed recently.
JF	115	Do you charge the attendees
IA	116	No, absolutely not, if we do it would kill the event stone dead.
JF	117	Look at the actual operations and the contents of the events, what would you say is the
	118	main method of content delivery was?
IA	119	It's chalk and talk, so that is a bit of a weakness, it's largely chalk and talk we keep
	120	talking about doing something different but haven't decided what that something
	121	different is, it's easy to say do something different, do something radical, do something
	122	more engaging but then you say okay, tell me what to do, but the people who say that
	123	then turn round and say "I don't have a clue". We have an hour before the event which
	124	was always a lab tour, but we have run out of labs and new things to show people so
	125	we now run hour long training sessions or two half hour training sessions for people to
	126	have a little taster of shop floor metrology training.
JF	127	So that is delivered before the event?
IA	128	Yes, that's before the event and that is delivered by the [ORGANISATION] PVP Team
	129	Production Verification Programme Team
JF	130	Does the content of the event follow on from the previous one?
IA	131	No, they're a discreet series, the only red threads are those strategy, product,
	132	innovation, skills, it's not like a TV series where you pick up one end of the event at the
	133	start of the next.
JF	134	Do you include a networking period at any point?
IA	135	Two networking periods, so that's something we've changed there's registration,
	136	networking and refreshments from five thirty until six, that was the only networking
	137	event. We've now decided to have a break halfway through the programme and we
	138	have another fifteen minutes-ish of networking.
JF	139	Do you use exhibitors at your events to display or showcase products?
IA	140	Yes always, so we have a number of partner equipment manufacturers and we offer
	141	two of those the opportunity to be present every time, we then offer other business
	142	support programmes and [VENUE], to be more particular the {FUNDING PROGRAMME}
	143	to have a presence in the future, so somebody will have to be willing to stay behind
	144	and stay until quarter to eight/ eight o'clock other than the good people who sit on the
	145	front desk on reception.
JF	146	In terms of the marketing for the event, how do you ensure that you get the marketing
	147	out there?
IA	148	We've built up a network of organisations who we contact to let them know that the
	149	event is on, etc and we have an active LinkedIn, social media marketing and we e-shot
	150	to our database, as well. We also have a monthly newsletter that runs parallel to the
	151	monthly events and we always flag up the events and at the end of every event we tell
	152	people what the next event will be, there's a flyer in the delegate pack and that sort of
	153	stuff.
JF	154	How long before would you usually start that?
IA	155	Well we've been planning the April 2020 event for about the last month, so we're
	156	about nine months ahead of actually running the event
JF	157	Following on with marketing, what would you say is the most common form of
	158	marketing that you use?
IA	159	We use LinkedIn and e-shots, we don't do Twitter because by and large we have
	160	contacts who don't tweet and it tends to be an older audience and we have a monthly

	161	e-shot, we have LinkedIn, a weakness of what we do is that we should have a stronger
	162	network of people who like and share LinkedIn postings, that's a very definite
	163	weakness, we're not reach as many people as we could with our network of sort of
	164	close friends and family on LinkedIn.
JF	165	Before the event, how do people usually attend to register?
IA	166	They've got to register online, now when I say go to, if I speak to somebody and I know
	167	that individual is a bit of a problem person in terms of registering online, we will
	168	register on their behalf but by and large we will capture it by an Eventbrite registration.
JF	169	And how long before do people usually register?
IA	170	For the October event we've got about fifteen registrations already and we've probably
	171	had some of those for a month or more
JF	172	How often are you likely to send out reminders about the event? How often are you
	173	posting about it on LinkedIn?
IA	174	Good question, it's not structured, maybe it should be, the closer we get to the time of
	175	the event we have more and more frequent meetings to finalise the detail and it
	176	typically comes up on that agenda that we need to do another LinkedIn post, so that
	177	doesn't have the real rigour and structure that it probably should and it's a bit ad-hoc,
	178	it should be a bit more forward planned than it is.
JF	179	In terms of the implementation of the event, what would you say as a percentage of
	180	the sign up's is the dropout rate?
IA	181	It's probably a dropout rate of about a third, we've had one or two events where it has
	182	been significantly lower than that, the famous incident when we had ninety-six people
	183	or however many it was and we didn't have enough chairs, yes probably about a third.
JF	184	On the flipside of that how many unregistered people turn up?
IA	185	Not many these days, a handful I would say
JF	186	In terms of during the event how likely are you and the team to stick to the plan?
IA	187	In terms of timings, we're going to buy a timer so that it's visible to the speakers and
	188	hold them to their timing because that's been poor on the last couple of events, but
	189	that is down to us and how the person fronting the event on the day has actually kept
	190	people to account, yeah the last two in particular have been poor from a time keeping
	191	point of view, so we're going to do something about that.
JF	192	Looking at the legacy of the events, do you collect feedback post event?
IA	193	Yes, it's very difficult to get feedback, so the event agenda has a feedback form on the
	194	back of it, we always make a call to action from the front to fill it in and when we run
	195	the competition we asked for it to be filled in as well but the response rate has been
	196	very poor, which is really disappointing because we always make the point that their
	197	feedback is valued and we genuinely want it and get maybe ten percent of people fill it
	198	in.
JF	199	So, from the small amount that you do get, how do you use the feedback?
IA	200	We have a standard method within [ORGNAISATION] nationally for grading the
	201	feedback from our customers, I can't for the life in me think about what it's called, it's a
	202	very strict grading system because you drop off the worst feedback and you drop of the
	203	best and I think it really harshly penalises us in terms of feedback because of the low
	204	percentage of people who feedback, so we've adopted it because it's the standard
	205	metric used within [ORGANISATION] and we feed that back to the central marketing
	206	team, but I think it's unduly critical of the event.
JF	207	Do you ever provide feedback to the venue itself?
IA	208	Well there's nothing wrong with this venue, all joking apart we never have problems
	209	with car parking, and we don't see it, but no there's absolutely nothing wrong with this
	210	venue.
JF	211	Finally, how effective do you believe your events have been overall?

IA	212	From a straight commercial perspective you would never run another one, because
	213	there's no direct link between the events and commercial revenue but in my eyes this
	214	is as ten year project to raise the awareness of [ORGANISATION] these events have
	215	been running now for three years so there is a long way to go in terms of creating a link
	216	between these events and commercial activity, even if you assume a direct link to
	217	commercial activity is what you want and I'm not sure that's what we do want but even
	218	if we got one project worth ten thousand pounds to [ORGANISATION] as a result of the
	219	events activity, I think in terms of direct cash cost they cost us about four hundred quid
	220	a year, so if you got one ten thousand project and it's cost four hundred quid a year, I'd
	221	like to bet that if we were recording it there has been a direct commercial benefit
	222	probably not through services delivered from our base but by a project funded by an
	223	event mechanism. We're working on a project right now valued at twenty-nine
	224	thousand pounds, let's say for arguments sake somebody had come to one of our
	225	events heard about [ORGANISATION] spoke to somebody else who spoke to somebody
	226	else who spoke to somebody else and said what you need to do is talk to
	227	[ORGANISATION] it would be really tough to associate that thirty thousand pound
	228	project with a conversation that had gone through various people and for me it's worth
	229	investing on the chance we get those sorts of projects.

JF	001	What are the reasons that you run your events?
IB	002	So we've got around 340 businesses locally who are members and pay subscription
	003	deals, the pay us £25 a month plus VAT and this gives them a range of services one of
	004	these that we identified that is extremely valuable to them is events and we run them
	005	basically to give added value and education to our members. None of the events that
	006	we do have any kind of accreditations or anything like that, you don't get a certificate
	007	at the end of it or anything like that it is purely to keep on top of current trends and
	008	educate the members, so that they can implement what we give them at these events
	009	straight into their businesses.
JF	010	Are there any specific obligations that you need to meet to run these events?
IB	011	No, literally because of the way we operate we literally listen to our members, we talk
	012	to them we do surveys with them and things like that and we'll just talk to them if they
	013	pop in for a coffee we'll say "right what kind of events do you want? What do you want
	014	to know about? What do you want to learn about?" and then we take that information
	015	and we literally think right who can we get to facilitate this? We're very free in what we
	016	can do in terms of if we come up with an idea and think 'God this will be good' we can
	017	do it, but we do just like to make sure that it is going to give added value. One of the
	018	things that we say to anybody that facilitates any of our masterclasses or workshops is,
	019	please take to our audience, the audience that you have on a level, we tell them
	020	exactly who they're going to be talking to, we tell them exactly what types of
	021	businesses are going to be in the room and we say "please make sure that they can
	022	take something, even if it's only just one thing away today" and walk straight back into
	023	their business and implement it today, that is kind of what we ask.
JF	024	How would you define a successful event, what would make you think that it had run
	025	well?
IB	026	A successful event would obviously be well attended, that's a key indicator, if it's well
	027	attended we know we've hit the mark but the obviously we have had in the past
	028	maybe one or two that have been, well one specifically I can think of that was very well
	029	attended because the subject matter was correct, but in the end the facilitator wasn't
	030	brilliant, which we misjudged, so I think we can gauge the room plus we ask for
	031	feedback and we talk to our members and we ask them what they think and it is
	032	literally as basic as just saying "What did you think?" and then asking a series of
	033	questions, so we know it's successful if people are leaving and walking away with
	034	happy smiling faces and they say "I can use that, that was brilliant, I really enjoyed that,
	035	I can take what he or she said today and I'm going to go and do that now"
JF	036	Do you have a calendar of events that you run throughout the year?
IB	037	Yes, so basically, we've got an event on the 4th October, which is a huge event which
	038	we're still working on at the moment. Once that's over and that's my huge focus at the
	039	moment, everything is just on that event, once that's over I will take towards the back
	040	end of October and November to plan out minimum the first six months of next year,
	041	so as I say that will involve going out to the members, sending a survey out asking what
	042	they want to hear about in the forthcoming year and we will plan and co-ordinate six
	043	months' worth of events which is crazy to do and it practically tips me over the edge
	044	because as you know planning events, it's coordinating: date, time, venue, facilitator,
	045	food, catering, staffing it's a huge job in itself, it's a huge undertaking.
JF	046	Is there anybody in the local area that are doing similar events?
IB	047	[NEARBY UNIVERSITY] are starting to come into the area and put on events because
	048	they're funding for SME's in this area and I know that they're starting to do bits and
	049	pieces, I've seen that they have a social media event coming up and we've covered
	050	social media so they are doing similar stuff to us. We've also got our own another

	051	division of our parent company who also run their own series of events as well, which
	052	we are trying not to step on each other's toes with although they have done a social
	053	media one as well, but it's a partner company so we try and work in tandem with them.
	054	Aside from that I don't hear too much, there's the odd thing that pops up where it's 'oh
	055	this company are doing this event' but in terms of events that are well attended and
	056	stuff I think we kind of have a monopoly on that really.
JF	057	Looking at the actual plan of the event itself what day would you typically plan an
	058	event on?
IB	059	We tend to go midweek; Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday are always going to be the
	060	best days and I think that that's obvious to me, purely because you come into work on
	061	a Monday and if you do an event on a Monday morning it's kind of like why, because
	062	everybody after the weekend they want to get into work and have a look in their
	063	diaries, plan their weeks out. Mondays are a day for catching up on everything after
	064	weekend. Fridays people are not massively interested in events on Fridays, although in
	065	saying that we have actually changed the biggest events that we do of the year from a
	066	Tuesday to a Friday this year and the bookings are going quite well for it, so I don't
	067	know if I'm contradicting myself completely there, but traditionally and historically
	068	we've gone for; Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, with Wednesdays and Thursdays
	069	being the best days for masterclasses and workshops however all of our networking,
	070	like all of our successful networking events that we have are on Tuesdays, so yeah
	071	midweek seems to be a good time.
JF	072	What sort of times do you normally go for?
IB	073	We have tried all sorts, absolutely all sorts, it's just trial and error. I don't know if every
	074	area is different but we seem to find that breakfast events are particularly well
	075	attended and I think that is purely because if we run an event we tend to say eight for a
	076	half eight start. I know it sounds completely basic but if you have a breakfast event and
	077	say "we will feed you" you will get more people it's ridiculous, so we'll say to them
	078	"we'll do bacon buns, egg buns" make tea and coffee available, eight o'clock for an half
	079	eight start, that runs particularly well a breakfast event because it'll finish by, we
	080	usually say ten/ half ten at the most, people are back in the office for half ten, eleven
	081	o'clock and it's done and dusted and they have a full day ahead of them. We have run
	082	events over lunchtime before, they've been hit and miss and our networking events
	083	which are our sort of signature events are very well attended, [OTHER LOCATION]
	084	networking events are from half four until half six, we get roughly forty to fifty people
	085	at that one, that one was only launched at the beginning of this year as well, to have
	086	that many people attending is really quite good and our networking event that we have
	087	here at [LOCATION] on a first Tuesday of every month averages over the past two years
	088	seventy, so seventy business at each one, however I think it's going to be higher this
	089	year because we've really seen the numbers increase this year
JF	090	What time of year do you look at?
IB	091	August tends to be really quiet, we tend to avoid any sort of events, we always have
	092	our networking on the first Tuesday and third Tuesday of the month, that will stay but
	093	in terms of masterclasses and workshops we tend to quiet down in August because it is
	094	holiday season, the back end of July sometimes, but not everybody disappears just
	095	because it's the school holidays, we have to be mindful of that. We also look at our
	096	events calendars for example our [ANNUAL CONFERENCE], we do that at the beginning
	097	of October every year and there is another similar conference that happens in the local
	098	area towards the back end of October, so we'll look at other key events regionally and
	099	try to avoid those where possible.
JF	100	For any external events that you run, what would be the features that you would look
	101	for when you choose to use a venue?

IB	102	Well because we are a members organisation, we try for whatever we're doing across
	103	the board, not just for events, we try to use our members, we've got digital marketing
	104	agencies that we will outsource work to, so we try to use our members for everything
	105	and we've got a lot of large hotels certainly in [REGION] I'd say nearly all of the large
	106	hotels certainly function rooms are all members of ours, so we try to use a members
	107	where possible. However there certainly will be things, well to be fair a lot of the larger
	108	venues are all quite standard because they have their function rooms for specific
	109	reasons, for weddings or for conferences, so we'll look at the size of the room
	110	obviously based on the amount of people that we want to have, we don't like to run
	111	events where it is rows of seats theatre style because we think if you're going to be
	112	there for two hours you are going to want to spread out a bit and get comfortable so
	113	we always do it cabaret style. It's spacing, it is things like the sound, we'll bring in AV
	114	companies and stuff for whatever technical requirements we have we'll look at that,
	115	also image wise, we have been approached sometimes by places that are non-
	116	members because we will use non-members as well, so we have been approached by
	117	places that are non-members and have said "come and have a look at our venue, we'll
	118	give you the room free" but if it doesn't fit with our brand and image the we can't use
	119	it because we've got a specific clientele that expect a specific level from us, so that is
	120	the type of things we'd look at for venues.
JF	121	How many staff do you have to plan and run your events?
IB	122	So, in terms of planning and running the events it really is the [ORGANISATION] team
	123	and there is currently four of us, so I will sit down and I will plan out the event and
	124	everything and I'll bring on board, my [COLLEAGUE A] to help me with the logistics of
	125	running it, maybe booking the AV and all the rest of it and then we have [COLLEAGUE
	126	B] who will help with the social media and marketing side of things and booking
	127	speakers, that kind of stuff I will do and on the day staffing there's usually two or three
	128	of us, we've pretty much got it down to a fine art where everybody knows what's
	129	expected of them, it will all be planned ahead of time. [COLLEAGUE B] will turn up on
	130	the morning with a box with name badges in it, signing in sheets that type of thing, I
	131	will be co-ordinating with the speaker and the AV people. Once the doors open
	132	[COLLEAGUE B] is there on the desk to hand out badges and to sign people in,
	133	everything will be setup AV wise and the speaker will be looked after it's just a case of
	134	welcoming people in. We can do any event with two people regardless of if it was one
	135	masterclass that accommodates one hundred people we could do that with two
	136	people, but if we wanted staff there to actually talk to the people and network with
	137	them and be a representation of us we'd maybe have three or four other people as
	138	well.
JF	139	Do you have a budget to run these events?
IB	140	We're not for profit so we try to do everything for as little as possible, in terms of
	141	venue hire we always negotiate to have the room hire free and we get that because we
	142	explain to the hotel that we're going to bring in up to one hundred people along to
	143	your venue so they're getting people through their doors that are going to see their
	144	venue and facilities, it's also because we've got a great relationship with these people
	145	now, so we would probably get the room hire free. We try to use members who are
	146	experts to facilitate, however if it comes down to getting a national expert than we
	147	have paid for speakers before, I suppose the short answer to that is that there is no set
	148	budget for masterclasses and workshops in particular and it's just judged on an
	149	individual basis we have in the past paid nine hundred pounds for a speaker, we've also
	150	had speakers that have done it free of charge but we've also equally have speakers that
	151	we've paid five grand for, we can pay up to fifteen/ twenty grand for a speaker it
	152	

	153	depends on the calibre, they get a lot of money, there is a lot of money in public and professional speaking.
JF	154 155	As you have mentioned that the majority of the events are for members is there any additional charge on top of what they already pay?
IB	156 157 158 159 160 161	No, we don't charge for the masterclasses and workshops there's no additional charge because it's all included in the membership. [ANNUAL CONFERENCE] if they are taking an exhibition stand we do charge for that and the charge to exhibit this year is £175 (plus VAT) which compared with other exhibitions in the local area is really low, there's another exhibition locally that charge £600 per stand, but no we don't charge members.
JF	162	In terms of content delivery, does it tend to be solely masterclasses?
IB	163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170	We have a number, so for our masterclasses they would probably have the feel of a seminar, someone will stand up and deliver a talk for it tends to be an hour, they can speak for an hour and then we'll do a Q&A which will tend to last for fifteen minutes something like that and there'll be interaction but it won't be going off and doing an activity, it'll be minimal. Workshops we do a lot more intimately, we only have up to twenty people on a workshop because we invite interaction onto those, there may be activities, there may be debate and there maybe chat so there's a completely different feel and obviously networking is completely different altogether.
JF	171	Does the content of the events follow on from each other?
IB	172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184	No they're completely separate, we have tried that before a few years ago we had a series of events called [WORKSHOP NAME] we were putting on roundabout five workshops a month and they would be themes and the uptake was shocking, absolutely shocking and they were getting cancelled all over the place, in the end we cancelled the programme took a step back and thought we're not getting the audience and at that time we have a membership of around two hundred and thirty and we thinking that we had two hundred and thirty businesses and if we have two hundred and thirty key businesses in terms of associate members we've got another three or four hundred businesses and there's a core group of around six hundred people "why aren't we filling a workshop with twenty people?" and it was just blowing our minds, but I think we were giving people far too much and they were looking at it thinking it was just far too much, so we literally stripped it right back, we do one workshop a month or one masterclass and now we're filling those and it just works now.
JF	185	Do you always include a networking part of your event for the attendees?
IB	186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197	We do and we don't label it networking because that term just seems to turn people off, but we do in a clever and simple way, the best things usually are simple, so we say the event is from half eight until half ten but we will never start at half eight, at half eight there will be tea, coffee and breakfast, that's your networking time and people don't realise that they're networking because they've arrived they're getting their coffee and they're having organic conversations and it doesn't feel like they're networking, there's many people that don't like networking and don't like the label so if we just give them a little half hour, just to grab a coffee, grab a bun or biscuit whatever depending on the time of day, they always get that half an hour and we always leave around twenty minutes at the end of it as well because invariably people sort of turn to each other and have a chat about what they've seen so, yes topping and tailing we always give it.
JF	198	How do you ensure that there is a demand for the event?
IB	199 200 201 202	Purely because of asking the members what they want, however in saying that in can be quite difficult because you might only get four key topics back and if we're going to run around about, in terms of masterclasses and workshops, as a rough estimate six or seven masterclasses a year, maybe the same amount of workshops in a year so if

	203	you're only getting four key themes that are coming out of that, then there's got to be
	204	an element of right we'll try this and we'll try that. I mean the majority if not all of our
	205	masterclasses and workshops are well attended. However, if I'm going to be
	206	completely honest with you, we've cancelled one that was supposed to be going on
	207	right now and we only cancelled it last week because it was on cyber security and we
	208	have covered it a little bit, I say a little bit we've had three events on it in the last year
	209	and although we branded this one slightly differently we only had around seventeen or
	210	eighteen people booked on to it and for a masterclass for us that's unheard of we get
	211	fifty, sixty, seventy people to our masterclasses, our January one had ninety and that
	212	was just content copyright. With this cancelled one I just don't know if we didn't hit the
	213	mark with the subject matter, I don't know if the marketing was right, in fact if I'm
	214	honest I don't think the marketing was right for it, so you just never know really.
JF	215	How long before the event would you start the marketing campaign?
IB	216	Six weeks, minimum. Six to eight weeks really.
JF	217	What is your most common form of marketing?
IB	218	It would be mailshots, we need to get more clever with this to be honest with you, so
	219	we've got a targeted mailing system called Mail Chimp, so we've got this setup and we
	220	find that e-mailing is a lot more effective because it's a lot more personal and that's
	221	what people want to see, so we do both, obviously there's word of mouth, there's
	222	posters in the toilets, there's social media, there's newsletters that we send out, all
	223	manners of things.
JF	224	Are there any new innovative strands of technology that you are using or thinking
	225	about using?
IB	226	We are thinking about bringing out an app certainly for our [ANNUAL CONFERENCE] so
	227	that's obviously very different for the events that we do but potentially going forward
	228	an app of some description.
JF	229	How do attendees usually register for events?
IB	230	We use Eventbrite, so we'll put in all of our marketing that we put out in whatever
	231	form we always put links back to our website, our Eventbrite, we did use to have our
	232	own in-house booking system on our website, but Eventbrite is just, since we've
	233	started using Eventbrite we've opened ourselves to a whole new audience that had
	234	never even heard of us that are booking on to events and say "we've found you on
	235	Eventbrite and we've never heard of you can we come along?" we always say yes and
	236	quite often after that we sign them us as members, so yes Eventbrite has been great
	237	for us.
JF	238	How long before the event would the attendees register?
IB	239	It varies it really varies, if we start our marketing campaign six to eight weeks earlier
	240	bookings will come in when it first goes out you know then they'll be a surge, then
	241	they'll be a bit of a lull, then maybe a week to two weeks before hand people will be
	242	more up to date with what their availability is and we'll get a last-minute surge
JF	243	Do you tend to send out a reminder before?
IB	244	Yes, we do, we monitor numbers daily almost for any event that we do, most mornings
	245	when I first walk in my first conversation with [COLLEAGUES] is about where we're at
	246	with the event. We have a weekly meeting where we look at all the numbers and we
	247	get the numbers sent out to us but we monitor the figures daily, we have a week to go
	248	two weeks to go all that sort of stuff but if we have three weeks to go and we think
	249	actually we need a bit more we'll slot something else in.
JF	250	What would you say that the dropout rate is usually at?
IB	251	Around about 20%
JF	252	Do you ever have any people who turn up without registering?

IB	253	Oh yes, we get that all the time that's probably around ten to fifteen percent of people
	254	who rock up and say "oh I definitely did book" or just turn up on the day.
JF	255	How likely are you to stick to the event plan on the day?
IB	256	It's almost just engrained in to us, it is what it is, we turn up to the venue everybody
	257	knows their roles [COLLEAGUES] know exactly what they've got to do, I know what I've
	258	got to do, we've got the timings, we'll set everything out, everything will run exactly as
	259	it should.
JF	260	You mention that you collect feedback post event, do you find it difficult to get
	261	responses?
IB	262	If we send it out as a Survey Monkey or something like that afterwards that doesn't get
	263	a massively great response, that's hit and miss, so what we do is we leave feedback
	264	forms on the table and whichever speaker finishes speaking, usually myself will take
	265	them off at the end and I'll remind everyone "there's a feedback form we really need
	266	to know what your thoughts are on this and how we can improve things going forward"
	267	and if people are told are that point most will.
JF	268	So, if it's done at the end of the event you will usually get a good response rate?
IB	269	Yes, yes we will.
JF	270	I suppose we've covered the next question; how do you collect the feedback?
IB	271	Yeah that's the best way, I mean Survey Monkey's just, I don't know people just can't
	272	be bothered to be honest with you and I don't think it's a horrible thing, I think people
	273	are just busy and think "I'll come back to that" or they just can't be bothered to fill in
	274	an online survey but if they've actually attended an event and they've got a form and
	275	it's just a tick box exercise, we do have comment boxes and stuff and some people will
	276	leave comments but if we just give them the key questions that we want to know
	277	about the event, we've got that organised already, we use pretty standard ones,
	278	people will fill them in there and then for you.
JF	279	Do you provide feedback to venues that you have used?
IB	280	Usually we only feel the need to give feedback to venues if there's anything negative,
	281	but we use pretty much the same venues over and over and we tend to use the ones
	282	that we know we can rely on. I think the only negative thing with venues, recently
	283	there was a food issue but if the staff have been brilliant, we always like to tell them
	284	that, but no not really.
JF	285	How do use the feedback or can you give me an example of when you have used the
	286	feedback to improve your events?
IB	287	That's difficult I'm having to think about the questions that we actually ask, we do
	288	analyse everything that we get in terms of feedback and if anything does come back
	289	that is negative from it in terms of improving it next time we'll probably look at the
	290	speaker and whether we would use again, again there is one in particular that springs
	291	to mind straight away that I don't think we hit the mark with and we'd obviously
	292	potentially not use that person again. We'd just analyse it as we saw at the time and
	293	we take it on board everything that's said, and we would react to what's there.
JF	294	Finally, how effective do you believe that your events have been overall?
IB	295	I feel our events are very effective genuinely and that's why they are so well attended
	296	and that's also why it's very disappointing that we've had to cancel one because I can't
	297	remember the last time that we had to cancel a masterclass, some of the events hit the
	298	mark better than others that's always going to be the case, but subjects like social
	299	media are never going to go out of fashion and we run social media workshops every
	300	year, usually only one or two but we will cover it every year. Two or three years ago we
	301	covered a video production masterclass where we told people that the future is videos,
	302	people don't want static pictures anymore they want videos, it's not expensive to do,
	303	you can do them on your phone that type of thing, people literally walked out of that

	304	masterclass and were doing videos in the car park on their phone, I'm not even joking
	305	in the entrance to the hotel somebody was saying "I've just done a masterclass on the
	306	use of video in your business and it's really inspired me", that one was crazy so yeah
	307	we believe that very much so they do add really good value to our members.

Appendix 16 Interview Transcription: Interviewee C

JF	001	What are the main reasons that you run your events series?
IC	002	Okay, so the main reason why [PROGRAMME] runs the events which are business
	003	funding roadshows is to raise awareness of the [PROGRAMME] grant that is in the
	004	[REGION], so that is the main reason but for the roadshows we've found that the pull
	005	of just a [PROGRAMME] grant isn't quite enough to get an SME away from their desk
	006	so we run them as partnership events and we ask the funders and people in the
	007	councils to share details of the event, so that we can get a large group of businesses to
	008	hopefully hear about all the different offerings and the hopefully they will work with us
	009	to apply for a [PROGRAMME] grant.
JF	010	With the roadshows is there any specific obligation to run these as part of the bidding
	011	process?
IC	012	The money that [PROGRAMME] has is part of the regional development fund, so
	013	maybe the obligations are relating to how we advertise the event, we also need to
	014	make sure that it is value for money and we're not wasting money as such so we try to
	015	keep costs as low as we possibly can and sometimes other funders will chip in and help
	016	us with costs for catering and things like that, so they are the main obligations but
	017	mainly it's to a good event for SMEs, we don't charge them for attending the event but
	018	we need to make sure with this funding that we are spending it in the most efficient
	019	way but obviously with [PROGRAMME] the remit is to get these grants out to small
	020	businesses.
JF	021	When the event has finished how would you define if an event has been successful or
	022	not?
IC	023	Ultimately for [PROGRAMME] a successful event, for me personally a successful event
	024	is when there were lots of people there and they felt happy that they had spent the
	025	time wisely but then the definition for success for [PROGRAMME] and why we would
	026	run it again is we would perform some analysis on the event after and did we manage
	027	to get expressions of interest for the project that turned into a full application, we also
	028	use the roadshows because we run innovation workshops so were we to generate any
	029	applications for the workshops they would be the success measures that we would
	030	base it on going forward and organising another event.
JF	031	With the workshops and the roadshows do you have a calendar of events?
IC	032	Yes, so the [REGION] project went live in January earlier this year, so we do have a
	033	calendar we do map out the key areas where we would like to run the roadshows and
	034	we get in touch with the local councils and the funders to let them know the schedule
	035	or where we'd like to run them and then we also try to tag in the innovation
	036	workshops slightly after the roadshow so that we can generate the interest at the
	037	roadshow and hopefully some of the numbers at the workshop will have come from
	038	interest at the roadshow.
JF	039	Do you have any competitors that run similar events to what you run?
IC	040	I think that our roadshows are quiet unique they are partnership events and as far as
	041	I'm aware there isn't anything similar on offer at the moment which is probably why I
	042	think it has been a success in generating interest for SME's to attend, I suppose the
	043	only thing that could happen would be if there was a large conference on that day or
	044	something similar that an SME would think "Should I got to this event or that?" but I do
	045	try and do my research in advance, I totally check, I'd go on Eventbrite put on that date
	046	and see what was on and I'd probably even if there was an interesting event and my
	047	event was on the same day, if I knew it was going to affect my numbers I'd probably
	048	look to move my event because I just wouldn't want to risk my numbers?
JF	049	What would you say would be the most suitable day to hold an event on?

IC	050	So we've always done these events as breakfast events we've found that we've made
	051	them eight o'clock so people leave early and they can come along before their day as
	052	stated and they've got engrossed in their work, they can come along and have a bit of
	053	breakfast, maybe a bacon sandwich or something like that and a cup of coffee and
	054	then they can go after back to a day's work, that has been successful, however we did
	055	run an event at [VENUE] which was very successful and that event was at half past five,
	056	so that was quite nice as well that people had done their work and then they were able
	057	to go to the event. Certainly, for what we are offering either early morning or early tea
	058	time and maybe make it for an hour and a half at team time so people aren't losing
	059	their whole evening either because I think that's a consideration that people have got
	060	their families to get back to or jobs to do, so that can dictate as to how many numbers
	061	you are going to get.
JF	062	In terms of the time of year, when would you usually hold events?
IC	063	So, I'd definitely avoid school holidays and often [REGION] can often be different to
	064	other areas, so I would check the local council's website for school holidays in the area
	065	where I'm going to hold the event, I would avoid December I think if I could and I'd
	066	avoid August because of the holidays but other than that I think it's fairly even
	067	probably March or Easter isn't a great time either, so I think early planning is essential
	068	because they are a few time pockets throughout the year that you need to avoid.
JF	069	What are the features that you look for when choosing a venue?
IC	070	As I said it's money from the regional development fund so I wouldn't be looking for an
	071	all-out plush kind of venue but equally it's got to be a respectable venue, so for the
	072	roadshows it's needed to be a big room that can hold one hundred people
	073	comfortably, a room where to be able to have space to network after, a venue that will
	074	provide catering at a reasonable rate, easy to get to and parking is a big thing. I know I
	075	picked [VENUE] and parking is an issue but that was why we made the event slightly
	076	later and we did have good numbers there, although even though I told them to park
	077	in other car parks they did sneak into the staff car park because there were spaces
	078	available but it actually worked out quite well.
JF	079	On the flipside to that are there any features that would make you avoid a venue?
IC	080	Like I've said if it was hard to access, I try to pick areas where I know there is a
	081	concentration of SMEs, so [TOWN] was good because I knew there was a good
	082	concentration of SMEs who all knew [VENUE] and it is familiar. I've also held events on
	083	industrial estates where there has been lots of business and gone around with fliers to
	084	let them know we are going to be there so I think there's already a nice target market,
	085	if it was in the middle of nowhere, hard to get to, shabby, catering didn't look great,
	086	then it would be things like that which would make me avoid it.
JF	087	How many staff do you have to plan and run the events?
IC	088	Generally, it's me, yeah however I was fortunate on [PROGRAMME] that [COLLEAGUE]
	089	came back, so when I was running them on [PROGRAMME] it was just myself and then
	090	when [COLLEAGUE] came back we were able to do it more as a joint effort, there was
	091	also more admin support with doing the analysis of the events which was really
	092	important, so I'd say to organise an event of a hundred people, probably two staff is
	093	quite nice for that.
JF	094	So, you mentioned briefly, that you have a budget to run the events, do you charge the
	095	attendees for attending the events?
IC	096	We do have a budget set out, my line manager would tell me what the budget was and
	097	roughly how much I had to spend for each roadshow, so sometimes it's under,
	098	sometimes it's over but I do obviously have that in mind when I'm trying to source
	099	avenue and yes as I've said we don't charge the attendees, we're purely there as an
	100	

	101	awareness event to get as many SMEs to listen to the funders to just really get them to uptake the fantastic funding that's available for them/
JF	102 103	In terms of the actual running of the event what would be the main method of content delivery that you would use?
IC	104	Is that how we would get across the information at the event?
JF	105	Yes
IC	106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116	Yeah, so all the funders have a PowerPoint, they come along and in advance they send us their PowerPoint details we load them up to the computer at the event and then each funder would come up and deliver their set of slides, we did find sometimes it could be a little content heavy, but then the trouble is that is the attraction to the delegates coming, hearing from the funders, so we've tried to kind of mix it up a bit and at the last couple of events, we've just held one in [LOCATION] and we had an actual funding beneficiary who came and talked and everybody absolutely loved that because they were able to say how they accessed [PROGRAMME] I think that there was three other funding pots they'd accessed as well and they were able to talk to the audience about the process that they'd been through and nobody could sell it better than a business.
JF	117 118	This question might seem slightly off when thinking about the roadshows, but does the content of the event follow on from the one before, mainly for the workshops?
IC	119 120 121 122 123	The workshops are completely separate and they're mainly about a business innovating in their business and building an innovation plan, so it is quite different, but for our [EVENT NAME] it's the same content for everyone one, so there'd be no need for an SME if they'd been to one to come to another, they've had the information so yeah it's not a series where they'd have to attend three or four or anything.
JF	124	In terms of the roadshow events, do you include a networking period at any time?
IC	125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134	Yeah, I think that's absolutely vital, so when they arrive we'll probably have ten minutes networking whilst everybody can get a coffee, find their seats and just have a little look round, we ask the funders to bring their literature and we have tables set out so they can just start to familiarise themselves with the different funding pots and then we run through the presentations and we allow between thirty minutes and an hour for networking at the end because SMEs is a very hard market to target, a lot of the business owners are time poor, so to get through with a digital marketing message is quite hard, whereas if you have had that networking contact and you've exchanged business cards, you've had a conversation it's much more powerful, so I find it's vital to have that networking time.
JF	135	I suppose we've just covered this, but do you use related exhibitors at your events?
IC	136 137 138 139	So yeah, it's the funders, yeah including [PROGRAMME], we'll take up a stand, bring our literature and our banner and then we generally say from your project, bring two people so that one is always stood at the table and another body can be out networking, just to make sure that you don't miss anybody that can be quite good.
JF	140 141	In terms of the marketing side, how do you ensure that there is enough demand for the events, how do you market them?
IC	142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150	So when I started with the project the numbers were a bit low with these events so what we did was we really tried to push the partnership idea, so not only did we ask the funders to get the message out, which they were fantastic at but we also asked the councils to help us and they were brilliant, they really got on board with it, they helped us and I think it's just making sure that everybody gets something of benefit to themselves out of the event, so the councils would be able to hit their targets in terms of projects, in terms of SMEs understanding the funding pots and then they were able to go in after the event "Did you enjoy the event? How can we help you more?" and then for the funders we obviously get to make those connections as well, we didn't do

	151	much advertising as in advertising on radio, newspapers, that kind of thing, we haven't
	152	felt that would work and also it's a lot of money, which the project doesn't have, social
	153	media has been fantastic so we've been trying to make sure that we are connected
	154	with everybody and made sure that the with the key funders and councils, we alert
	155	them, we've put a message out and we'll say "Please can you share our post?" and it's
	156	filled up through those kind of ways really.
JF	157	How long before the actual event will you start the marketing campaign?
IC	158	I think that is of ultimate importance and I think we'd probably start that around two
	159	months before at least, if you can do a little bit longer that's even better, but if you can
	160	do it at least two months before that's fine.
JF	161	I suppose we've just mentioned this, but would you say that the most common form of
	162	marketing is social media?
IC	163	So, I'd say social media and asking the funders to promote to their networks, so
	164	whichever ways that they would promote, so they might have a mailing list that they
	165	might send a message out to, just different ways like that but yeah, I'd probably say
	166	social media and e-mail campaign.
JF	167	How do attendees register to attend?
IC	168	We'd set up an Eventbrite page and we explain on the Eventbrite page the business
	169	benefits to attending and we also list a little snippet of what each funder can offer as a
	170	hook to get them in, so yeah it's done through Eventbrite, they register for free and
	171	then we have a plan in place to regularly remind them about the event, I'd say the
	172	trouble with free events is that a lot that register aren't going to turn up so I generally,
	173	people get a bit panicky when I'm doing it because obviously at [VENUE] a hundred
	174	was quite a lot, especially with networking but I know that even with a hundred
	175	registered they're not going to all turn up so I am that if generally 70%, if you've got a
	176	free event I'd generally say between 60% - 70% will actually attend, just so that we
	177	wouldn't get too upset, we wouldn't over-order on things like catering.
JF	178	How long before the event would people typically register?
IC	179	As soon as they get the marketing message they would register immediately and then
	180	we would also send out messages, because they're so popular we would send out
	181	messages saying "Ten places remaining, twenty places remaining", we'd also have it on
	182	the Eventbrite page, how many places were remaining, we certainly wouldn't advertise
	183	it if we were struggling to fill it, but I think that's quite a good marketing tool, people
	184	always seem to want to get on board if it seems quite popular.
JF	185	How often are you likely to send out reminders before the event to make sure that
	186	people are still aware?
IC	187	I'd probably try and send out about three reminders, so I'd send out one, two and a
	188	half to three weeks before because they could've registered two months ago and I
	189	generally think that people often don't have too much booked in three weeks before,
	190	so it gives them another opportunity to check their calendar to make sure they can
	191	attend and then I'd probably go three weeks to one week before and then I'd probably
	192	go something like two to three days before something like that.
JF	193	I suppose we've covered this already, but as a percentage what would you say the
	194	dropout rate usually stands at?
IC	195	Yeah so as I've said if the event registers a hundred, I would expect seventy people to
	196	turn up.
JF	197	Do you ever have any unregistered attendees turn up?
IC	198	Loads, yeah, I think because it is free then that is a real issue with free events that
	199	people have seen the marketing message and they are a bit flaky on whether they are
	200	going to attend or not and they remember about the event and go "oh yeah I will go
	201	along".

JF	202	In terms of the event plan, how likely are you to stick to the plan?
IC	203	Unless we had a problem with the equipment it generally just carries and stays, what I
	204	try and do the day before, I will obviously make phone calls to the event, I will have
	205	obviously checked that we have the right facilities, I will make a phone call saying
	206	"Have we got this? Have we got that?" I will also go the day before if I can and take my
	207	laptop and just check everything works, all the sound works because it's just
	208	unbelievable how many things can go wrong with an event, so if I can I will go the day
	209	before because I tend to when the event starts at eight I will tend to arrive at seven in
	210	the morning and there is just so much to do, everyone's arriving and everyone wants
	211	to talk to you and if you've not got everything in place you're shafted.
JF	212	When you're doing post-event analysis you've obviously mentioned the analysis that
	213	you collect for the project, do you ever collect feedback from the attendees?
IC	214	Yes we do, so what we do is I tend to find if you e-mail a feedback form after the event,
	215	then the response would be extremely low, so on every chair at the event I leave a
	216	feedback form and at the beginning of the event I say "There's a feedback form and
	217	we'd really appreciate your comments" and then I remind them before the last
	218	presentation I'll say "Please, please, please can you fill out your feedback form" I'll put
	219	a pen on every chair and generally we get a lot of feedback coming back and from my
	220	experience is the best way to get feedback and it is the feedback that is invaluable
	221	because we can improve if nobody tells you what's wrong or what they didn't enjoy.
JF	222	Can you give an example of when you've used the feedback to improve?
IC	223	Yes there's been a couple of comments where people have been given a bit of an
	224	information overload but the trouble is that is what it is, it's hearing from the funders
	225	that attracts them, but when they hear from those funders it's quite a lot of
	226	information to take in, so how we've improved that is, we have been really strict with
	227	the funders and said "you must stick to five minutes otherwise we're going to ding the
	228	bell and escort you off" and we've also asked the funders to not go into the
	229	technicalities of the grant they offer, to literally just say the main offering and make it
	230	as simple as possible because your message won't get through if you start to add in all
	231	the technical detail at the early stage, everybody has got different voices, so some are
	232	quiet, some are loud so where we can we try and have a microphone, they don't like to
	233	but we try and encourage the funders to use the microphone as well because it's just a
	234	shame if the people at the back can't hear, so I think they're a couple of ways we've
	235	utilised feedback certainly to improve our event and then I've never really provided
	236	feedback to the venue, maybe I have, when I was in [DEPARTMENT] delegates would
	237	stay in a hotel, so if ever the hotel wasn't up to scratch or the rooms weren't up to
	238	scratch I would feed that back to the hotel so they could make sure that things were
	239	right the next time we sent a group of delegates.
JF	240	Finally, in terms of the project itself how successful would you say the events have
	241	been?
IC	242	Well we ran them in [PROGRAMME], when I joined the project in 2018, the roadshows
	243	were a bit low but towards the end we managed to massively up the numbers and as I
	244	said the success measures were a couple of expressions of interest and a few workshop
	245	applications which we hit and then [PROGRAMME] started and we started January 19
	246	and the line managers decided that they were of use and to take them forward into
	247	the new project, so we feel they've been very effective and also the new partners to
	248	the roadshows have had what they have needed as well so it's been good.

Appendix 17 Interview Transcription: Interviewee D

JF	001	What are the main reasons that you run your events?
ID	002	Well basically in our company we run programmes on behalf of different organisations,
	003	so we are running events because we need to get a certain amount of companies
	004	through the programme and we feel like putting on events is the best way to do it, so
	005	all the events are different topics and workshops and we feel like that's a great way to
	006	relay information to businesses to get them to them to their [PROGRAMME AIM]
	007	because that's what the programme is to get them [PROGRAMME AIM] so yeah it's to
	008	share knowledge, it's all free events that we run.
JF	009	So, in terms of the obligations the events are just a method of meeting them?
ID	010	So, yeah, we basically put on the events to get the businesses there it's basically
	011	sharing knowledge and innovation and things like that.
JF	012	In that respect then how would you define a successful event?
ID	013	People being there, obviously putting on events, you're marketing them and expecting
	014	people to come so I'd say a successful event is getting them there, sharing knowledge
	015	and people find it useful and getting feedback forms and speaking to people that are
	016	there that's how we define if it has been a successful event or not, so yeah we
	017	generally don't charge for events, so that is the hard bit, people say that they will come
	018	and then obviously there's always a dropout rate because people get busy and
	019	obviously because we don't charge people think "oh we won't go to that" so that's
	020	probably the challenge, but yeah I guess bums on seats and whether people find it
	021	useful I guess is how I'd define a successful event?
JF	022	Do you have a calendar of events?
ID	023	Yes and no really, at the beginning of this programme, which has been running for
	024	about a year we sat down and said that we'd like to deliver sectorial events and then
	025	we'd like to deliver a certain amount of workshops, we had topics and themes that we
	026	wanted to deliver them on, so yeah we do but then as we got through the programme
	027	and realised what people are interested in we've put on different workshops and we've
	028	put on events when we've realised what people want when they're signed on to the
	029	programme, so there is a programme in place of a calendar but then we are quiet
	030	flexible in what we will deliver and there's no sort of "well we have to deliver one a
	031	week" sometimes, for example last week was quiet a busy week we had something on
	032	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday whereas this week we've only got one on,
	033	so it just depends on who is around to deliver them what is available, yeah so there is a
	034	calendar but it is very flexible.
JF	035	Would you say that you have any competitors that run similar events?
ID	036	Yes and no because we're delivering it on behalf of a programme, we're kind of
	037	targeting a certain amount of people that are on the programme, so once they're on
	038	the programme we're delivering events to what they want, so we're targeting these
	039	people that are signed on to the programme, not necessarily other people although
	040	we're then letting them come so they can be signed on to the programme, obviously
	041	there's quite a lot of events going on out there, we do look if there is a competitor
	042	running, or there is someone running a similar type of event, we'll then approach them
	043	and say "can we do this in collaboration?", like we did with the [EVENT] at [VENUE],
	044	where we joined forces, so I wouldn't say we were in direct competition with anyone
	045	but we just look to work with other companies and organisations to make it work
	046	because we're not charging anyone, we're just there to help deliver innovation and to
	047	help people improve their businesses.
JF	048	In terms of the logistics of organising the event, when would you say that the best day
	049	to hold an event would be?

ID	050	Probably a midweek or a Friday morning, I tend to find that Mondays aren't great
	051	because after the weekend, Friday afternoons aren't great, often I think that a Friday
	052	breakfast or ten o'clock meeting works well, if not generally during the week, Tuesday,
	053	Wednesday.
JF	054	And what sort of time would you say would be most suitable?
ID	055	I tend to think mornings run better, but not too much of an early start, so we'd
	056	normally do sort of welcome teas and coffees to start at half nine to start at ten, it just
	057	gives people time to find out where they're going maybe check their e-mails in a
	058	morning and then get started and we tend to run four-hour events sort of ten until
	059	two, something like that. We have done larger events, it just depends what the event
	060	we're delivering and the agenda with in it, but sometimes I think that the maximum for
	061	people to send information would be four hours.
JF	062	What would you say is the most suitable time of year to hold an event?
ID	063	I would just say kind of avoid school holidays in a way because obviously you know
	064	even though I don't think everybody takes the time off, summer especially August isn't
	065	a great time to hold an event although we did hold little events in August people are
	066	still around so it just really depends on what you are trying to do, I'd say in December
	067	wouldn't be great to hold big events, but then little events if you just want ten people
	068	that's alright, again first thing in January isn't great, but then again it just depends it's
	069	quite difficult question because I guess it just depends on how big and what you're
	070	trying to do but yeah my main sort of thing would be to try an avoid the school
	071	holidays because there's a certain amount of people who might be off.
JF	072	What are the sorts of things that you are looking at when selecting a venue?
ID	073	Easy access really, car parking or right near the train station, somewhere with natural
	074	light, good AV equipment, catering facilities, yeah, I suppose that's it.
JF	075	Is there anything that would make you avoid a venue?
ID	076	Probably if it was really expensive or not in a great place, I mean we've held events
	077	here and I think one of the issues has been the car parking, people have said but it's
	078	not stopped us putting them on because we can have access to a free room, so we'll
	079	still put them on but we just try to put on better information on directions, car parks
	080	and location, so I think you can make it work you've just got to send out good joining
	081	instructions and things like that and you know maybe call them and just explain the
	082	situation.
JF	083	How many staff are involved in the planning and running of the events?
ID	084	For this particular programme we've only been aiming at particular workshops, so ten
	085	to fifteen people so there's probably me who books the venue and markets it and then
	086	maybe two other people that deliver it so there's only sort of two or three people that
	087	are involved.
JF	088	Do you have a budget to run the events or does it vary?
ID	089	It varies on what size event we're doing, but obviously we get whoever we have won
	090	the programme off they will give us a sum of money and then we can sort of spend
	091	that on running the events and that kind of stuff like that, again it's just making sure
	092	that you search around and don't just go with the first venue that's just overpriced,
	093	we've been quite lucky in that we have access to a free meeting room, this building is a
	094	part of [UNIVERSITY] so we've got a lot of rooms that we can use for free and then
	095	we're just paying for the catering so that does tend to be how we've run the event so
	096	when we're joining with people, for example at [VENUE] we've either just paid for the
	097	catering or the room has been free, stuff like that, so yeah just being really careful with
	098	costs.
JF	099	I think we've covered this one, so you don't charge the attendees?

ID	100	No, we don't it's all free, just because of the programmes we run, yeah, it's just all
	101	about getting, our targets, we're target driven within the programme, so it's all about
	102	meeting those targets and getting people onto events.
JF	103	You've mentioned different types of events, what would be the main type of content
	104	delivery in your events?
ID	105	Just depends on the topic and the innovation specialist that works in that area, they
	106	would just deliver whatever topic that was for that event.
JF	107	Does the content of the event follow on from event to event?
ID	108	No, not necessarily when people generally apply for this programme they tick what
	109	they are interested in, within the events that we could put on and then we would
	110	choose, what was the most popular and then we would put events on like that so they
	111	don't, I mean in some ways they can follow on but in some ways they're different
	112	topics, but it's all sort of around innovation and how you can grow your business
	113	whether it be private finance, whether it be circular economy, whether it be marketing,
	114	so they're not necessarily day 1, day 2, day 3, day 4 events, they're all sort of different
	115	topics, but it generally stuff that would help a business grow.
JF	116	Do you include a networking period at some point in the event?
ID	117	Yes, it's generally a working lunch or sort of half an hour teas and coffees before and
	118	within the events we do sort to get to know one another away from sort of "What do
	119	you do?" and then I guess you're kind of in a workshop and you're talking about what
	120	your business does people get to listen and hear about what you do and then there's
	121	the opportunity at lunch to sort of network and discuss ideas there.
JF	122	So, do you think that's an important part of what you do?
ID	123	Definitely, when we've done a collaboration with [COMPANY] and stuff like that and
	124	they're all about networking, so we've gone there and sort of got involved with them
	125	and in business collaboration with them and that is why people go just to network so
	126	yes definitely.
JF	127	This question is probably for your larger events, but do you use related exhibitors at
	128	your events?
ID	129	Yes, it depends what sort of event it is, we either work with other organisations, it
	130	tends to be like [ORGANISATION] and [ORGANISATION], organisations that fit in to our
	131	topic areas.
JF	132	How do you ensure that there is the demand for your events?
ID	133	So, when we ask people to register for the programme, we ask what topics they're
	134	interested in we put on the events to cover the demand.
JF	135	How long before the event would you start the marketing campaign?
ID	136	Again it depends on the size of the event, if it's sort of a larger event we're looking at
	137	sort of six to eight weeks, for smaller events we'd just leave to about a month, I'd say
	138	the longer time period the better but obviously if you're thinking "oh we need to run
	139	another one of this event" it can't often be like that but yeah I think sort of three or
	140	four weeks for the smaller ones.
JF	141	What would be your most common form of marketing for events?
ID	142	Eventbrite, LinkedIn and then we sort of look through the forms and we direct e-mail
	143	and stuff like that, so yeah, we have got a lead generation specialist, so she's actually
	144	gone through the forms and made calls and seen if they're interested in this event that
	145	we're running on this day.
JF	146	In terms of the preparation for the event how do the attendees register to attend?
ID	147	On Eventbrite, then they'll receive a message of registration on Eventbrite and then a
	148	week before we'll send them a thank you for registering with joining instructions and
	149	how to get their e-mail.
JF	150	How long before the event do attendees register?

ID	151	It can again depend, it depends on how quickly you get the event up, I always say that
	152	people can register, unless the event gets full, until six o'clock the night before.
JF	153	How often are you likely to send out reminders before the event?
ID	154	Generally, probably about a week, so they get a reply from Eventbrite and then about a
	155	week before and then a couple of days before just to make sure they turn up and kind
	156	of put "if you now can't come please let me know", we do get the odd person who just
	157	turns up and it's fine because it's a free event anyway, we've just got to sign them in,
	158	so yeah a week and then a couple of days before.
JF	159	If you could put it down as a percentage what would you say the dropout rate usually
	160	stands at?
ID	161	That's quite difficult I'd say at around fifteen to twenty percent, sometimes more it's
	162	hard to say really and I always get suckered in to ordering more catering because that's
	163	my fear of being there and not having enough and then it's like you've paid for it, but I
	164	think that's better than not having enough.
JF	165	How many un-registered people are likely to turn up?
ID	166	Just I'd say the odd one again I'd say it depends on the size of the event, I think the
	167	bigger the event the more likely people are to turn up, the smaller the event the less
	168	likely, but like I'd had a couple the other day who hadn't registered, there was fourteen
	169	people registered and then two just showed up but it's not every event it's just an
	170	average I'd say.
JF	171	In terms of running the event how likely are you to stick to the event plan during the
	172	event?
ID	173	I think that times aren't the only thing that don't differ, I'd say that they generally stick
	174	to the agenda unless the people in there are a different type of audience to what you
	175	were expecting and then maybe you'd be able to change it, quite flexible, again that's
	176	for smaller meetings, for bigger things I don't think they tend to go off plan, the smaller
	177	ones you can just kind of interact with people one to one as the workshops are going
	178	on and I think you can kind of end up going around the same area but talking about
	179	different things, it's not necessarily for the smaller workshops a massive structure
	180	event it'll be sort of sometimes, for the one on Wednesday we'll put the timings for the
	181	tea and coffee, the start and finish and then the topics in the middle, it's not so
	182	structed it's just "this is what we're going to discuss" and then just leave it at that.
JF	183	In terms of post event, do you collect feedback from attendees?
ID	184	Yeah we have the same sort of feedback form for most events, we hand that out and
	185	the end, then we see what people's comments are and then if they're interested in
	186	other events or one to one advice then we read that and just work from that really,
	187	often if there's been a good quote on there we could use that on social media in
	188	promoting other events or case studies something like that.
JF	189	How else do you use the feedback to improve events?
ID	190	Again if somebody has said "I found it difficult to get there" then it's us sending out
	191	better joining instructions and just things like that really, it's about listening to people
	192	otherwise there's no point in doing a feedback form so just making sure you read it and
	193	if someone has said they'd like the presentation sent or some one-to-one advice or
	194	something like that it's just yeah reading them and the information that you have
	195	received.
JF	196	Do you provide feedback to the venue?
ID	197	No not really, not unless they come on the day and say "has everything been alright?"
	198	then we do but not generally in an e-mail or anything like that unless I guess it's been
	199	negative, so yeah, I suppose that's a bit bad really because I suppose if you have had a
	200	good experience then you should shout about it.
JF	201	Finally, how effective do you believe that your events have been overall?

ID	202	Yeah, I think they've been effective, like I say people have been interested in a topic
	203	and we've got innovation experts and expertise in certain areas, so yeah, the
	204	programme has been successful so therefore the events have been quite successful

JF	001	What are the main reasons that you run your events?
IE	002	So we are [ORGANISATION] so the majority of the time we are connecting people
	003	together, in fact all the time we are connecting people together, so probably for two
	004	thirds of the time we're also promoting funding calls from the Government whether
	005	that's on a specific topic or whether it's more general.
JF	006	Are there any specific obligations that you have to run the events?
IE	007	So quite often we have two, well we run an [ORGANISATION] so we have two types of
	008	projects, sometimes we are getting paid directly to run events, in which case it's part of
	009	the delivery plan for the project itself, other times we have a project request to
	010	network and bring people together in a more general sense but again it's very difficult
	011	to get an effective network without getting people to meet face to face, so we do try
	012	to run not just an event, it might be an event with some other online meeting or one-
	013	to-ones with other companies, so most of the time there are specific obligations to run
	014	the events.
JF	015	In terms of the events, how would you define a successful event?
IE	016	We have internally various metrics, so I have a number of introductions that I have to
	017	make in a year so if I'm at an event I will record the number of introductions that I
	018	make, so we've also got a number of engagements, not only people that come to
	019	events but people who actually benefit proactively from the event as well, but as far as
	020	how I would define a successful event, rather than a level of hard KPI's I would say a
	021	good level of energy in the room and good engagement with people who take part.
JF	022	Do you have a set calendar of the planned events?
IE	023	To a certain degree, so I've run about forty events in the last two years, we run with an
	024	Eventbrite, we like Eventbrite and we like to get that running six weeks in advance, I
	025	would probably say I've planned my events till around about June time so I would have
	026	a rough calendar six months ahead and then a defined calendar three months ahead
	027	with a six weeks lead time to actually get the Eventbrite up and running.
JF	028	Do you have any competitors that run similar events?
IE	029	We do sometimes, so what we try and do because we're run by government and we're
	030	completely neutral in this, what I like to try and do is partner up with people for
	031	example with [EVENT SERIES] I've run an additive manufacturing with them in the past
	032	where we've spoken, we run an event last week where we spoke with
	033	[ORGANISATION], so personally and for most of the [ORGANISATION] as well we tend
	034	to partner with people, so there are people who run similar events and I'm quite happy
	035	to attend those and I try not to duplicate events so if there's something happening two
	036	months before in a similar location on a similar topic, if I find out about it soon enough
	037	I would hopefully try and say "Look, can we help partner up with this? Would you like
	038	someone to come and speak at this event?" But if not then I just attend the event and
	039	try to get around the event and see as many people on the floor, so yes there are
	040	people who run similar events to us.
JF	041	What would you say would be the most suitable day to hold an event on?
IE	042	Good question! I tend to avoid Fridays, I would say Tuesday or Thursday would be
	043	when I would tend to hold more events, yeah Tuesday or Thursday, it depends on the
	044	event itself so sometimes if we're having more internal people we might hold it on a
	045	Monday but it's getting people out on a Monday so Tuesday or a Thursday would be
	046	the ones I tend to focus on.
JF	047	What would you say would be the most suitable time of day to hold an event?
IE	048	If you're looking at a shorter event, I would say for smaller businesses not over
	049	lunchtime, so breakfast or evening, between those two I've heard people give reasons

	050	for both, so the [EVENT SERIES] are on an evening and they're always well attended,
	051	breakfast ones tend to be people who want to find out about it, whereas evening ones
	052	tend to be people who go to have a drink and a snack after work, whereas the
	053	breakfast ones are probably worth it for those who are actually going to contribute in
	054	the morning.
JF	055	What would you say would be the most suitable time of the year?
IE	056	I'm actually organising an agricultural event, I know it's outside of your area but you
	057	have to organise that between November and February before they go off and do their
	058	ploughing and harvesting and things, you run the risk in the Winter of the weather and
	059	the weather can really kill off events and you can have a thirty to forty percent dropout
	060	just because it's windy and rainy on that day and you're more likely to get bumps on
	061	the motorway in the dark in the winter as well which can have a knock on effect for the
	062	people coming, so it's more risky to run it in the winter, so obviously don't run any in
	063	the school holidays, we always avoid that so you know we're running a series of six
	064	over six weeks and we've missed the February holiday week because you always get a
	065	dropout then, when you get to sort of September/ October time that's really great
	066	because people are refreshed after the holiday and like to find out about events, the
	067	only trouble with then is that loads of other people are running events so you've got
	068	more chance of having an event that's duplicated by someone else, so yeah obviously
	069	not Christmas time, so because I look and monitor events that are in my sector there's
	070	a real push around mid-September to mid-December, that's a really good time but
	071	everybody else is having them, then January, February and March not so much
	072	because you run the risk of it being cold and then it picks up after Easter, certainly to
	073	before the school holidays, if you're running with Universities you've got to think about
	074	those finishing as well, but if you're holding an event with academics, more academics
	075	will turn up if you target them after the students have gone home for the holidays
	076	before they finish, they also have quite long holidays so I tend to talk to the people
	077	involve and say "When's the best time to hold this?" and quite often the academics will
	078	come back and tell me which is a good week for them.
JF	079	When you're looking for a venue to hold an event at, what are the sort of things that
	080	you're looking for?
IE	081	So there are two aspects, firstly if I partnering with somebody I tend to, when we're
	082	going round the country, I tend to have little say in the venue itself, so I don't often
	083	have bad venues, the things that can trip you up in a venue are; audio connectivity or
	084	video connectivity in a laptop and we had an event last week in [VENUE] and actually
	085	everything worked well but the little clicker thing was in the middle of the room and
	086	the clicker didn't work so that can be annoying, at the moment because of the way I'm
	087	working other features are; we'd quite like the idea of not having single use plastics
	088	there because that reflects badly on the environment, so that's something that we're
	089	going to be looking at in the future, also how they source their food as well so that's
	090	really the latest thinking, that probably wouldn't have affected me two years ago,
	091	obviously fairly light in the room, a good temperature, you don't want too warm or too
	092	cold and the ability to change the temperature depending on how people feel that's
	093	good as well and then you talk about the things that make the extra difference and I'm
	094	actually working with a colleague who's looked at what are the things that delight
	095	people and he was saying that obviously unlimited tea and coffee, places where coffee
	096	is on tap and people can just nip out and grab extra that always works well, good food,
	097	ability to get there fairly easily as well, so there are loads of things same as running a
	098	business you've really got to have more and more now so coffee on tap is one that I
	099	would expect, sweets, little pastries and things always help as well. When I went to an
	100	event recently they had a little pick and mix at the side and they had Liquorice Allsorts

	101	and old style sweets, which was good, I'm not sure I'd be prepared to pay for that
	102	because I know it was expensive and it was in Central London as well, I mean it does
	103	help but whether or not I'd be prepared to pay for it would be another thing.
JF	104	How many staff, if any, do you have to plan and run the events?
IE	105	So we have an events team, they will come along to an event, the general rule is if
	106	there's more than fifty people attending then they will come along and sit and run the
	107	registration desk, under fifty people, it tends to be we do it ourselves but obviously if
	108	we are partnering with somebody and there are local people there, for example if I was
	109	doing something at [VENUE] I would hope that there was usually people there anyway,
	110	so having one of our staff come up from [LOCATION] or [LOCATION] or wherever just
	111	to sit on the desk, you'd have to say what's the carbon footprint that goes along with
	112	that irrelevant of costs or things like that, but they will do the name badges and the
	113	monitoring but I do quite a lot of that as well, so I'm responsible for putting the agenda
	114	together, getting the speakers there, doing a lot of the backroom stuff like setting up
	115	the Eventbrite and sending out the joining instructions.
JF	116	Do you have a budget to run the events?
IE	117	Yes, we do, and how we tend to operate that is that I will have a budget for a project
	118	and at the outset of the project I will have a certain amount to run a certain number of
	119	events.
JF	120	Do you charge attendees?
IE	121	We tend not to, so it's an ongoing issue within our organisation as to whether we
	123	should or not, because my personal remit at the moment is to try and get businesses
	124	to come to these events, it's very difficult to get people to come, it's a big hurdle for
	125	them to get their credit card out to charge them, so we try not to at all costs, the
	126	money probably isn't worth the lack of people, if we're trying to run an outreach event
	127	and we're targeting an SME who is very time poor, who can just about afford the time
	128	off to come to the event, what we don't want is to get him to the point where he has
	129	his credit card and he thinks "Oh I can't be bothered", you know so it's not necessarily
	130	about the money it's about the process of getting people to pay rather than just
	131	registering is quite complicated so yeah I'm prepared not to, I'm quite lucky in that if
	132	we've been given a project by [FUNDER] or [FUNDER] then they tend to give us money
	133	to run events for free.
JF	134	At the event itself what is the main method of content delivery that you use?
IE	135	We're fairly old style, so we tend to use PowerPoint, so the advantage of that is that it
	136	is fairly generic across wherever you are, you can tend to plug in your laptop and use
	137	PowerPoint, some people at our place are looking at new ways that are much more
	138	interactive and it can run really well and it cannot run really well, another thing that we
	139	use is, where we gather peoples opinion from the audience, it's a digital tool and again
	140	that can work well and it cannot work well, so you're risking going online where people
	141	can leave you your comments, it's really good to get it up in a digital format but
	142	actually you've got to tell people how to get on it and if the internet is not steady there
	143	and if you've got a hundred people there then it can crash, so content delivery tends to
	145	be mainly PowerPoint presentation followed by some discussion it's usually in groups
	146	where people sit round and we ask them based on what they have just seen what
	147	would you do.
JF	148	In any cases does the content of your events follow on from the previous one?
IE	149	In most cases we tend to run the same events across a number of locations, so if we
	150	are running an awareness event, we will tend to run them all across the U.K including
	151	Northern Ireland but that's essentially giving the same content, we occasionally might
	152	follow on so we ran a series of event where we had people running a general overview
	153	of the specific dates, additive manufacturing projects, then we ran a series of events

	154	that ran on from that looking at specific topics within additive manufacturing, so we
	155	had one on design, one on processes and one on raw materials and things like that,
	156	occasionally we do, but most of the time we don't.
JF	157	Do you include a networking period at some point in the event?
IE	158	Always, as a networking organisation we always do that, whether we do that at the
	159	beginning or the end, I would say if you're doing a breakfast event, if you do the
	160	networking in advance it gives people to get there at different times but obviously at
	161	the end they've got more to talk about so we tend to do it at the beginning and the
	162	end.
JF	163	Do you ever use related exhibitors at your events?
IE	164	Wherever possible, because we're funded we've got to have a balance between, we
	165	can't be seen to be giving some people access and other competitors not, so in some
	166	areas it's fine because it's such a niche area it's fine, but if we're going with exhibitors
	167	we need to give everybody an equal chance to exhibit at the event.
JF	168	How do you ensure that there is a demand for your events?
IE	169	Well we're quite lucky in that, so I run two special interest groups and that's where we
	170	look at the governments focus areas for the future linked to their industrial strategy
	171	and then from that we'll say what are the areas that need to be developed more,
	172	where can we have the focus and get the interest from, so actually we have driven to
	173	look at events that are linked to government strategy and therefore if there's
	174	buzzwords around additive manufacturing, plastics, recycling and things like that, I'd
	175	say buzzwords, we tend to have topics that are around at the moment so therefore I
	176	think that it all links on to the fact that there is demand for the events and therefore I
	177	think that's why we have so many people turning up at the events, because they know
	178	it is a part of the industrial strategy of the government and they want to find out more
	179	about it, so they'll come along to the event.
JF	180	How long before the event would you usually start the marketing campaign?
IE	181	A minimum of six weeks, really three months, again longer than three months and
	182	people forget about it, so six to twelve-week period.
JF	183	What would you say is the most common form of marketing for events?
IE	184	We use LinkedIn, we use Twitter, we have newsletters, we've got a general newsletter
	185	for the [ORGANISATION] which covers all events and then we each sector has a specific
	186	one, so there's manufacturing and materials, agricultural and there's also energy, we
	187	would send all of our newsletters out which tend to be a mixture of funding, news and
	188	events that are coming up, Twitter, we also try to link in to the Local Enterprise
	189	Partnership if we're holding an event in a certain location and whatever is the business
	190	group around that location as well, we'd also go to them as well and we'd also try to
	191	use their local businesses.
JF	192	How do attendees normally register to attend?
IE	193	Eventbrite, although we are looking at changing that, we looking at a continuous
	194	improvement process, Eventbrite is good although it has some limitations and things
	195	are going on in the background which don't work for us as an organisation holding over
	196	four hundred events per year, so we're looking to do some more, but at the moment
	197	we're using Eventbrite.
JF	198	How long before the event do attendees typically attend to register?
IE	199	Good questions, this is me thinking anecdotally I don't have any evidence to back this
	200	up but I would say we've had events where we've had nobody the week before and
	201	then we've had a good attendance, if it's academic then they tend to register a lot
	202	longer before than businesses, some businesses will wait quite a long time, so I would
	203	say if it's a shorter awareness event then people tend to register a lot closer to the
	204	event, if it's on a specific topic, for example I'm running [EVENT] next week where

	205	people have a genuine interest in that area then people will register a lot longer
	206	before, so I would say it depends on the event but I only work on a twelve week lead
	207	time anyway so people don't register before that, particularly if you're working with
	208	academics then people will want longer which we do sometimes then you'll find you
	209	have a long time, some people register as soon as Eventbrite goes live and there'll be
	210	quite a dormant period until about four or five weeks before the event itself.
JF	211	How often are you likely to send out reminders about the event beforehand?
IE	212	If we have a Twitter campaign going then we will do it every week and then it's
	213	probably twice a week before the event itself just to keep that updated and it depends
	214	really, if we've got a good sign up we might not even have any reminders but if we're
	215	struggling, we'll probably keep LinkedIn going and if it's a newsletter then they tend to
	216	come out once a month and we wouldn't send an extra newsletter for an event, we'd
	217	just keep using Twitter and LinkedIn to keep pushing it, if we're struggling for numbers.
JF	218	As a percentage, what would you suggest that the dropout rate usually stands at?
IE	219	Thirty percent, if it's a free event, if people are paying the dropout rate is usually ten
	220	percent(ish) but if it's a full day event then the dropout rate is usually around twenty
	221	but if it's a short term, I mean we have had if it's been winter, early morning breakfast
	222	event the dropout can be up to fifty percent.
JF	223	Do you ever have any unregistered people turning up?
IE	224	Yes I would say probably about ten percent of people are unregistered that turn up, so
	225	if we're expecting thirty, yeah we might get three extra that wouldn't be a surprise, if it
	226	was a fairly small event and we had an extra one or two, yeah ten percent is something
	227	that I would work with, just off of the top of my head.
JF	228	In terms of running the event, how likely are you and your team to stick to the event
	229	plan?
IE	230	Most of the time we do, we always tend to leave it fairly flexible anyway, so when the
	231	speakers have their slot we tend to find that speakers overrun so if we've got
	232	discussion time, I'm just thinking of an event we had last week, we had a discussion
	234	time of an hour that ended up as half an hour and that's because the speakers overran,
	235	if the audience is engaged and the speaker is good than I will let the speaker have extra
	236	time, if he's meandering off topic than I will possibly interject, so if I'm hosting than it's
	237	down to me and how I feel the audience are participating, obviously the key is for the
	238	audience to have a good time and take in as much knowledge as they can, so if it's a
	239	good quality speaker than I'm happy to let him overrun.
JF	240	Do you collect feedback from attendees post event?
IE	241	Sometimes, we do, what we do with it is something that I would question, it's all very
	242	well collecting it but you need to do something about it, for example if we're running
	243	the first in a set of ten like we did in [VENUE] then we actually did something at the
	244	end saying "Look this is the first event in a series, what did you think? What would you
	245	do?" If we're running a series of ten and we're in the eighth we know where we are
	246	then, so sometimes we do and sometimes we don't.
JF	247	How do you usually collect feedback?
IE	248	We tend to use our system that works behind the scenes our CRM system we would
	249	send a link out from that asking for feedback, so we don't tend to use paper feedback
	250	at events that I remember, so we'd look at the event and decide we needed some
	251	feedback and then send an e-mail out, we quite like to use an enticer, so if actually we
	252	really wanted feedback we would say "If you want to get the slides from the event,
	253	please fill out the feedback form" then literally make the feedback form in two
	254	minutes.
JF	255	How do you utilise the feedback to help your events?

IE	256	Yes I think we've covered that so if it's one in a series then we would later on in the
	257	series, but if it's a one off and we're not going to do another one again there's
	258	probably not enough point in asking for feedback to start with. What I'm doing at the
	259	moment is getting feedback for all of the events as part of the special interest group,
	260	so at the end of the series of event we may have to feedback any other interactions
	261	and that's something we are starting to introduce across the company as well.
JF	262	Do you ever provide feedback to the venue?
IE	263	I will provide feedback on the day if they ask and I'll provide it particularly if we've had
	264	any problems, I don't know about other people but I certainly don't tend to provide
	265	feedback to the venue if they don't ask for it but if they do then I will provide it.
JF	266	Finally, how effective do you believe that your events have been?
IE	267	For the general awareness events I think if you have the right speakers then you can
	268	get a good level of information across in a couple of hours, particularly for SME's I
	269	mean you'd have to ask them of course but I think that you can send them all the
	270	information across that they'll never get round to reading actually getting people in a
	271	room and discussing how it effects their business is really the crux to it, some aren't
	272	effective I'll admit if we don't get a lot of take up on a specific issue but I'd say
	273	probably 90% of the events that I've held have been either effective or very effective.

Appendix 19 Theme: Increased Organisational Awareness

Interviewee	Line(s)	Quote
Increased Organisational Awareness		
A	005-006	"it just seemed like a good thing to do as part of our remit for SME engagement"
C	002-004	"the main reason why [PROGRAMME] runs the events which are business funding roadshows is to raise awareness of the [PROGRAMME] grant that is in the [REGION],"
D	003-004	"we are running events because we need to get a certain amount of companies through the programme and we feel like putting on events is the best way to do it"

Appendix 20 Theme: Specific Obligations

Specific Obligations		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
D	010	"So, yeah, we basically put on the events to get the businesses there"
E	007-009	"So quite often we have two, well we run an [ORGANISATION] so we have two types of projects, sometimes we are getting paid directly to run events, in which case it's part of the delivery plan for the project itself"

Appendix 21 Theme: Community Feel

Community Feel		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	008-009	"Blank sheet of paper, just that we wanted to create a community of SMEs who felt positive about [ORGANISATION]"
B	011-014	"No, literally because of the way we operate we literally listen to our members, we talk to them we do surveys with them and things like that and we'll just talk to them if they pop in for a coffee we'll say "right what kind of events do you want? What do you want to know about? What do you want to learn about?"

Appendix 22 Theme: Event Calendar Planning

Event Calendar Planning		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	039-040	"I will take towards the back end of October and November to plan out minimum the first six months of next year"
C	032-034	"so we do have a calendar we do map out the key areas where we would like to run the roadshows and we get in touch with the local councils and the funders to let them know the schedule"
D	023-026	"at the beginning of this programme, which has been running for about a year we sat down and said that we'd like to deliver sectorial events and then we'd like to deliver a certain amount of workshops, we had topics and themes that we wanted to deliver them on"
E	024-027	"I would probably say I've planned my events till around about June time so I would have a rough calendar six months ahead and then a defined calendar three months ahead with a six weeks lead time"

Appendix 23 Theme: School Holiday Avoidance

School Holiday Avoidance		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	075-076	"we try to make sure we don't clash with school holidays and public holidays"
B	091	"August tends to be really quiet, we tend to avoid any sort of events"
C	063	"So, I'd definitely avoid school holidays"
D	063	"I would just say kind of avoid school holidays"
E	062-063	"so obviously don't run any in the school holidays, we always avoid that"

Appendix 24 Theme: Organisation Demands

Organisation Demands		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	118-119	"but if it doesn't fit with our brand and image the we can't use it because we've got a specific clientele that expect a specific level from us".
C	071	"it's money from the regional development fund so I wouldn't be looking for an all-out plush kind of venue"

Appendix 25 Theme: Accessibility

Accessibility		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	088-089	"The only problem with the [VENUE] is that [LOCATION] is not easy to get in and out of and the car parking isn't good"
C	073	"easy to get to and parking is a big thing"
D	074	"easy access really, car parking or right near the train station"

Appendix 26 Theme: Aesthetics

Aesthetics		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	113	"It's spacing, it is things like the sound"
C	072-074	"a big room that can hold one hundred people comfortably, a room where to be able to have space to network after, a venue that will provide catering at a reasonable rate"
E	083-084 091 095-096	"audio connectivity or video connectivity" "fairly light in the room, a good temperature" "places where coffee is on tap and people can just nip out and grab extra that always works well"

Appendix 27 Theme: Small Events Team

Small Events Team		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	106	"We have five people who get involved in the planning and running"
B	122-123	"So, in terms of planning and running the events it really is the [ORGANISATION] team and there is currently four of us"
C	092-093	"I'd say to organise an event of a hundred people, probably two staff is quite nice for that."
D	085-087	"there's probably me who books the venue and markets it and then maybe two other people that deliver it so there's only sort of two or three people that are involved"

Appendix 28 Theme: No Charge

No Charge		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	116	"No, absolutely not, if we do it would kill the event stone dead."
B	156-157	"No, we don't charge for the masterclasses and workshops there's no additional charge because it's all included in the membership."
C	099-100	"we don't charge the attendees, we're purely there as an awareness event to get as many SMEs to listen to the funders"
D	100	"No, we don't it's all free"
E	121-125	"We tend not to, so it's an ongoing issue within our organisation as to whether we should or not, because my personal remit at the moment is to try and get businesses to come to these events, it's very difficult to get people to come, it's a big hurdle for them to get their credit card out to charge them, so we try not to at all costs"

Appendix 29 Theme: No Series of Events

No Series of Events		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	131-133	"No, they're a discreet series, the only red threads are those strategy, product, innovation, skills, it's not like a TV series where you pick up one end of the event at the start of the next."
B	172-175	"No they're completely separate, we have tried that before a few years ago we had a series of events called [WORKSHOP NAME] we were putting on roundabout five workshops a month and they would be themes and the uptake was shocking, absolutely shocking and they were getting cancelled all over the place"
C	119	"The workshops are completely separate"
D	108	"No, not necessarily"
E	156	"occasionally we do, but most of the time we don't."

Appendix 30 Theme: Use of Related Exhibitors

Use of Related Exhibitors		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	140-142	"Yes always, so we have a number of partner equipment manufacturers and we offer two of those the opportunity to be present every time, we then offer other business support programmes and [VENUE]"
C	136-137	"So yeah, it's the funders, yeah including [PROGRAMME], we'll take up a stand, bring our literature and our banner"
D	129	"Yes, it depends what sort of event it is, we either work with other organisations,"
E	164	"Wherever possible"

Appendix 31 Theme: Eventbrite

Eventbrite		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	166	"They've got to register online"
B	230-235	"We use Eventbrite, so we'll put in all of our marketing that we put out in whatever form we always put links back to our website, our Eventbrite, we did use to have our own in-house booking system on our website, but Eventbrite is just, since we've started using Eventbrite we've opened ourselves to a whole new audience that had never even heard of us that are booking on to events and say "we've found you on Eventbrite and we've never heard of you can we come along?""
C	170-171	"it's done through Eventbrite, they register for free and then we have a plan in place to regularly remind them about the event"
D	147-149	"On Eventbrite, then they'll receive a message of registration on Eventbrite and then a week before we'll send them a thank you for registering with joining instructions and how to get there e-mail"
E	193	"Eventbrite"

Appendix 32 Theme: Registration Dependant

Registration Dependent		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	247-249	"we monitor the figures daily, we have a week to go two weeks to go all that sort of stuff but if we have three weeks to go and we think actually we need a bit more we'll slot something else in."
E	213-215	"it depends really, if we've got a good sign up, we might not even have any reminders but if we're struggling, we'll probably keep LinkedIn going".

Appendix 33 Theme: 15-35% Dropout Rate

15-35% Dropout Rate		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
A	181	"It's probably a dropout rate of about a third"
B	251	"Around about 20%"
C	195-196	"Yeah so as I've said if the event registers a hundred, I would expect seventy people to turn up."
D	161	"I'd say at around fifteen to twenty percent"

Appendix 34 Theme: Limited Unregistered Attendance

Limited Unregistered Attendance		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	253	"probably around ten to fifteen percent of people"
D	161	"I'd say the odd one"
E	224	"Yes I would say probably about ten percent of people are unregistered that turn up"

Appendix 35 Theme: Utilised Feedback for Future Planning

Utilised Feedback for Future Planning		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
B	288-289	"if anything does come back that is negative from it in terms of improving it next time"
C	226-228	"how we've improved that is, we have been really strict with the funders and said "you must stick to five minutes otherwise we're going to ding the bell and escort you off"

Appendix 36 Theme: No Feedback Unless Asked

No Feedback Unless Asked		
Interviewee	**Line(s)**	**Quote**
D	197	"No not really, not unless they come on the day and say "has everything been alright?"
E	263	"I will provide feedback on the day if they ask"

<u>**Appendix 37 Questionnaire Questions**</u>

This section will analyse the questionnaire questions that were finalised and asked to respondents. The questions aimed to collect data related to both research objectives 2 and 3. The background to the questions that were asked was based on Shone & Parry Planning Process for Events (2013). However, as also discussed the areas of the framework that were chosen in the questionnaire were primarily based on the key themes highlighted by the researcher from the responses of the interviewees. To assist in this description of this questionnaire each question will be analysed in depth throughout as well as an explanation of the selection of answers that the researcher provided.

Number of Questions

The number of questions was ten and the main reason for this was that the researcher understands the perceived time poor nature of those who work within an SME, to maximise the responses, the researcher believed that it was important to make the questionnaire as concise as possible. The impact that this had on the overall design of the questionnaire was that it placed a greater emphasis on the question selection whilst still attempting to extrapolate the most relevant and important data possible.

Title & Additional Information

<div style="border:1px solid black;padding:10px;">

Developing an events strategy at a Technology and Innovation Centre to encourage technology adoption within Small Medium Enterprises.

You are being invited to take part in a questionnaire for research looking in at the planning and managing of a series of events targeted at Small Medium Enterprises, by completing this you are confirming that you are employed by an organisation that is classified as a Small Medium Enterprise.

Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

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The above information provides the respondent with an understanding of the nature of the research that is taking place and provides an outline of the theme that the questions will be based upon, this was modified after respondents during the pilot process commented on how the information was slightly misleading. This section also ensures that the respondent is aware that they must be an employee of an SME to take part, this is massively significant in the collection of the data.

Questions

1) **How many business-related events have you attended in the past year? (Please select one option)**

	0		1 - 5
	6 - 10		11 - 15
	15 +		

Interview Theme – N/A

Question Analysis – It will allow the researcher to understand the numbers of events that individuals who work within SMEs attend within a year. For the purposes of the questionnaire it was designed to allow the respondent to start thinking about business-focused events.

Research Objective 2 – Aims to understand if there is any demand for SMEs attending events.

Research Objective 3 – If the number of events that an SME attends is known this will allow the event organiser to further understand their target audience.

Responses – Divided into sections that would allow for a good understanding of the number of events an SME attends without forcing the respondent to go into detail about specific events that they have attended.

Analysis – Frequency Analysis

2) **What would be your preferred day to attend an event? (You may choose multiple answers)**

	Monday		Tuesday
	Wednesday		Thursday
	Friday		Saturday
	Sunday		

3) **What would be your preferred time to attend an event? (You may choose multiple answers)**

	Early Morning (06:00 – 09:00)		Morning (09:00 – 12:00)
	Afternoon (12:00 – 17:00)		Evening (17:00 onwards)

Interview Theme – The lack of clarity that the event organisers had with relation to the date and time that best suited their attendees showed that there is no one set opinion on which time/ date the believe to be the best.

Question Analysis – Aim to understand what time(s)/ date(s) they would prefer to attend an event.

Research Objective 2 – N/A

Research Objective 3 – This information can be used as part of the planning phase of the event process.

Responses – Dates are days of the week. Times are times of the day. However, morning is split in to two sections based upon responses given by the interviewees.

Analysis – Frequency Analysis

4) What is your primary motivation for attending business events? (You may choose multiple answers)

	Increase knowledge on new industry developments		Source new clients (to either buy/ sell)
	Gain information on competition		Networking opportunities
Other (please state below)			

Interview Theme – N/A

Question Analysis – This aims to ask the individual directly what their motivations are for attending events.

Research Objective 2 – This aims to directly address research objective 2 by gaining an understanding of the reasons for SMEs to attend events.

Research Objective 3 – The understanding of what an SME wants from an event will assist in the event organiser being able to produce an event which will attempt to meet the objectives of the attendee.

Responses – The options provided were based upon responses during the interview phase and why the event organisers believed SMEs attended events. Options were also based upon data collected during the literature review.

Analysis – Frequency Analysis

5) What is your preferred method of content delivery at an event? (You may choose multiple answers)

	Speaker Presentation		Facilitated Workshops
	Practical Demonstration		Panel Discussion
	Peer to Peer Discussions		
Other (please state below)			

Interview Theme – Although the event organisers stated that they mainly used speaker presentations as the main method of content delivery, many interviewees were looking for alternative methods.

Question Analysis – This question aims to find out what methods SMEs want as part of the content delivery at an event.

Research Objective 2 – N/A

Research Objective 3 – This will allow event organisers to plan the content delivery at their event in ways that the attendee feels are most appropriate for them.

Responses – Developed from the responses given by the interviewees. If the respondent has any different ideas that are not listed, there is the option of inputting a response in the 'other' column.

Analysis – Frequency Analysis

6) How much do you value networking at a business event? (Please select one option)

	Extremely valuable		Very valuable
	Somewhat valuable		Not so valuable
	Not at all valuable		

7) Do you believe that dedicated networking time should be allocated at a business event? (Please select one option)

	Yes		No		Sometimes

Interview Theme – Interviewees described the importance that they placed on networking and how they believed it was important for their attendees.

Question Analysis – These questions aim to see if the attendees view the importance of networking in the same way that the event organisers do.

Research Objective 2 – Provide a greater understanding of the importance of networking in relation to event attendance motivation.

Research Objective 3 – The information can be used in the development of the agenda for when networking periods will take place during the events.

Responses – Varying levels of importance offered in Question 6 and the three options offered in Question 7.

Analysis – Frequency Analysis

8) How do you typically hear of upcoming events? (You may choose multiple answers)

	Eventbrite or another event platform		Word of mouth
	e-mail		Google or another search engine
	LinkedIn		Twitter
	Other social media		Newspaper
	T. V		Radio
Other (please state below)			

Interview Theme – The event organisers use of modern marketing channels such as social media and mailshots as opposed to more traditional methods such as television and radio.

Question Analysis – This will highlight the most effective channels for marketing an event to SMEs.

Research Objective 2 – N/A

Research Objective 3 – This will assist in the development of an effective marketing plan for an event.

Responses – Developed from the interview phase and suggestions that the SMEs made with regards to the marketing channels they use/ do not use.

Analysis – Frequency Analysis

9) Finally, how would you describe a successful event?

Interview Theme – N/A

Question Analysis – This will allow the researcher to gain an understanding of what an SME understands by a successful event, an open-ended question was used here to gain the widest possible selection of responses.

Research Objective 2 - This is one of the key questions into gaining a better understanding of research objective 2 as it will give an insight into the reasons why SMEs attend events.

Research Objective 3 – Dependent on the responses.

Analysis – Thematic Analysis

10) Please share any other comments you have below.

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Interview Theme – N/A

Question Analysis – Allows the respondent to leave any additional comments that they feel are appropriate.

Research Objective 2 – Dependent on the responses.

Research Objective 3 – Dependent on the responses.

Analysis – Thematic Analysis

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Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

1) How many business-related events have you attended in the past year?
   (Please select one option)

	0		1 - 5
	6 - 10		11 - 15
	15 +		

2) What would be your preferred day to attend an event?
   (You may choose multiple answers)

	Monday		Tuesday
	Wednesday		Thursday
	Friday		Saturday
	Sunday		

3) What would be your preferred time to attend an event?
   (You may choose multiple answers)

	Early Morning (06:00 – 09:00)		Morning (09:00 – 12:00)
	Afternoon (12:00 – 17:00)		Evening (17:00 onwards)

4) What is your primary motivation for attending business events?
   (You may choose multiple answers)

	Increase knowledge on new industry developments		Source new clients (to either buy/ sell)
	Gain information on competition		Networking opportunities
Other (please state below)			

5) What is your preferred method of content delivery at an event?
   (You may choose multiple answers)

	Speaker Presentation		Facilitated Workshops
	Practical Demonstration		Panel Discussion
	Peer to Peer Discussions		
Other (please state below)			

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6) How much do you value networking at a business event?
   (Please select one option)

	Extremely valuable		Very valuable
	Somewhat valuable		Not so valuable
	Not at all valuable		

7) Do you believe that dedicated networking time should be allocated at a business event?
   (Please select one option)

	Yes		No		Sometimes

8) How do you typically hear of upcoming events?
   (You may choose multiple answers)

	Eventbrite or another event platform		Word of mouth
	e-mail		Google or another search engine
	LinkedIn		Twitter
	Other social media		Newspaper
	T. V		Radio
Other (please state below)			

9) Finally, how would you describe a successful event?

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10) Please share any other comments you have below

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Thank you very much for taking part in this survey.