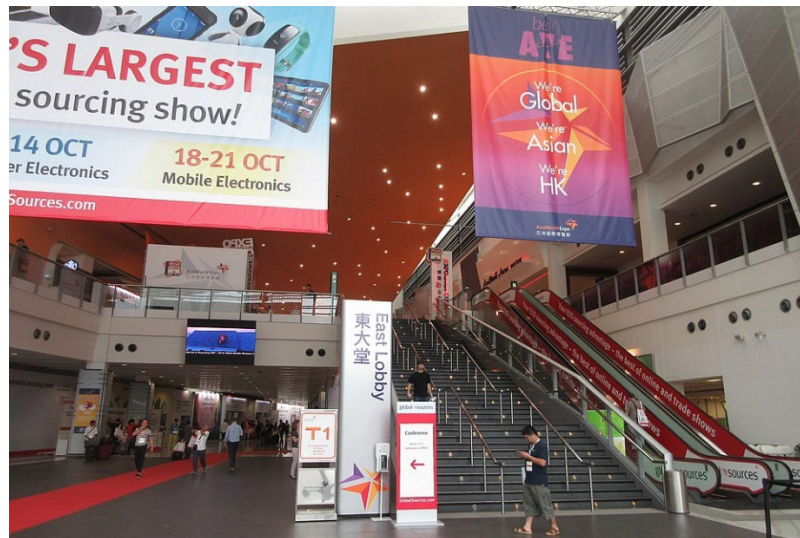


Smart and Safe Convention Experience: A Case of AsiaWorld-Expo



Source: Wikimedia Commons (2017)

Background

Officially opened in 2005, AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) is Asia's leading convention venue, strategically located next to Hong Kong International Airport. It offers over 70,000 m² of rentable space across 10 state-of-the-art, column-free exhibition halls (MEHK, n.d.). Celebrating its 20th anniversary, AWE is committed to transforming into a smart venue.

Internet of Things (IoT) Smart Building Management System

In 2018, AWE introduced IoT technology to enable smart monitoring of housekeeping, security, event safety, and facilities management (AWE, 2018). Through automated and digitalized communication powered by IoT technology, service performance and internal workflow efficiency have been significantly improved. Moreover, this technology is able to reduce energy consumption by automatically adjusting power and air circulation according to the flow of people in different parts of the facility (Ronald Lu & Partners, n.d.).

Entering the Age of Hybrid Events

As part of its 15th anniversary renovation project, AWE implemented a full-scale upgrade of its ICT network with "Wi-Fi 6" to serve the increasing trend of hybrid events (AWE, 2021). The upgraded network provides four times better connectivity in device-dense environments, fully supporting bandwidth-intensive, real-time quality streaming and smart applications such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) (AWE, 2021). At the same time, AWE debuted its first-ever movable hybrid meeting facility, the Mobile Studio. Equipped with studio-grade sound insulation, an independent air ventilation system, e-meeting and livestreaming gadgets, the AWE Mobile Studio is built for livestreaming and virtual meetings to be held anywhere and anytime (Pico, n.d.). Together, these new additions and improvements can meet the flexible hybrid needs of today's event organizers and offer a more seamless experience for attendees.

New Venue Hygiene and Sanitation Solution

On the other hand, since the outbreak of COVID-19, new standards for sanitization and safety assurance have emerged for event venues worldwide. As a result, the AWE introduced the world's first "CLEanTech" disinfection installation and advanced air purification technology (AsiaWorld-Expo, 2020). Such device has been placed at major trade exhibitions and conventions where visitors must be admitted through the device before entering the event halls. Once the visitors have passed the built-in temperature check, the device will let visitors in and help sanitize their outfits and carry-on items in just 12 seconds (AsiaWorld-Expo, 2020). Such technology plays an important role in reducing the risk posed to visitors and frontline workers at the venue.

Challenges

While introduction of these technologies can enhance operation efficiency and visitor experience, as well as promoting safety of all patrons, implementing and maintaining advanced technologies like IoT systems and hybrid meeting facilities can be complex, requiring ongoing and readily available IT support. Additionally, it requires staff to be adequately trained to operate and assist visitors with new technologies like the "CLEanTech" disinfection device. Furthermore, while innovations are essential, they may raise concerns among visitors regarding the effectiveness and reliability of such technologies, hence affecting their overall experience.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the implementation of IoT technology at AWE improve operational efficiency and visitor experience?
2. Apart from network improvement and introducing new hybrid meeting facilities like the Mobile Studio, what else can the AWE do to embrace the rising trend of hybrid events?
3. What role does real-time data play in managing large-scale events at AWE?
4. What challenges could arise in maintaining and operating CLEanTech devices during large-scale events?

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Keywords

- Event
- Internet of Things (IoT)
- Hybrid events
- Operational efficiency
- Hygiene
- Guest experience

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