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“The Role of Strategic Planning in Hotel Event Management”

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Abstract

Strategic planning plays an important role in ensuring hotel event success. This study investigates how strategic planning impact the effectiveness of hotel event management, particularly by examining how elements such as budget allocation, preparation time, and task allocation affect hotel event outcomes, including guest satisfaction, return business, and attendance. The analysis based on primary data from various internal documents, event performance metrics, and responses to surveys completed by the hotel staff. A total of 20 the biggest events held in 2024 year were analysed. Descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and boxplot visualisations were used to illustrate how different planning inputs correlate with these performance components. Boxplots were applied as a clear, non-parametric tool for examining variability, outliers, and trends in the dataset, offering an accessible and effective way to compare distribution across events without assuming normality. The visual outputs helped highlight key differences in how planning inputs aligned with performance outcomes. In addition, staff responses revealed issues such as time constraints, communication problems and lack of coordination before the event. These observations emphasise the need for strategic planning as well as effective operational execution to ensure successful hotel event management. As a result of the findings, practical recommendations were made to improve communication, enhance staff training and suggest the use of predictive analysis for future planning processes.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Hotel Event Management, Event Planning, Guest Satisfaction, Event Success.

Resumo

O planeamento estratégico desempenha um papel importante no sucesso dos eventos hoteleiros. Este estudo investiga de que forma o planeamento estratégico impacta a eficácia da gestão de eventos em hotéis, examinando particularmente como elementos como a alocação orçamental, o tempo de preparação e a distribuição de tarefas afetam os resultados dos eventos, incluindo a satisfação dos hóspedes, o retorno de clientes e a taxa de participação. A análise baseou-se em dados primários recolhidos a partir de diversos documentos internos, métricas de desempenho dos eventos e respostas a inquéritos preenchidos pelos colaboradores do hotel. Um total de 20 dos maiores eventos realizados no ano de 2024 foi analisado. Foram utilizadas estatísticas descritivas, análise de frequência e visualizações em boxplot para ilustrar como diferentes inputs de planeamento se correlacionam com estes componentes de desempenho. Os boxplots foram aplicados como uma ferramenta clara e não paramétrica para examinar a variabilidade, os outliers e as tendências no conjunto de dados, oferecendo uma forma acessível e eficaz de comparar distribuições entre eventos sem assumir normalidade. As representações visuais ajudaram a destacar diferenças-chave na forma como os elementos de planeamento se alinharam com os resultados alcançados. Adicionalmente, as respostas dos colaboradores revelaram problemas como limitações de tempo, falhas de comunicação e falta de coordenação antes dos eventos. Estas observações reforçam a importância do planeamento estratégico, bem como da execução operacional eficaz, para garantir o sucesso dos eventos hoteleiros. Como resultado das conclusões obtidas, foram feitas recomendações práticas para melhorar a comunicação, reforçar a formação das equipas e sugerir a utilização de análise preditiva nos processos de planeamento futuros.

Palavras-chave: Planeamento Estratégico, Gestão de Eventos Hoteleiros, Organização de Eventos, Satisfação dos Hóspedes, Sucesso do Evento.

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Introduction

In the hospitality sector, events are powerful tools that can support guest satisfaction, brand position, customer loyalty, and performance. The success of hotel events relies not only on creativity and logistical planning but also on structured and well-coordinated strategic planning. Even the most entertaining and innovative hotel event concepts can fail if timelines, responsibilities and resource allocation are not clearly established. This thesis explores how strategic planning impacts the effectiveness of hotel event management, focusing on key elements such as budget allocation, preparation time, and task coordination, and how these variables influence guest satisfaction as the primary performance outcome. The broader trends in repeat business and event attendance are also considered to provide additional context to assess the overall success of the event.

The research focuses on a detailed analysis of 20 events hosted at The Hotel Seaside Los Jameos throughout 2024. Using hotel documentation, performance data and staff surveys, the research applies descriptive statistics, boxplot visualisations and frequency analysis to identify how different planning approaches influenced guest satisfaction as a primary outcome measure. The findings aim to support hotel managers, event planners, and hospitality professionals in understanding the benefits of planning as a purpose and practical ways to improve event management processes.

The thesis has three main chapters and a conclusion, contributing to a fuller understanding of the research topic from both theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Chapter one contains the literature review, which is presented in five sections. The first section presents core concepts and key theoretical ideas about strategic planning and event management with relevant academic frameworks that support structured planning approaches. The second section discusses the importance of strategic planning in event contexts, offering definitions and evidence of its role in achieving successful outcomes. The third section outlines many generic barriers to the process of planning events, such as, time constraints, coordination problems, and limited resources. Fourth section identifies opportunities and best practices, such as the use of digital resources and tools, sustainability approaches and risk management. The fifth section provides a description of the hotel in which the internship was conducted and an overview of the operating environment in which the targeted interventions were conducted. Together, these paragraphs provide the theoretical framework to link to the empirical section.

The second chapter explains the research methodology, including the aims of the study, the data collection and data analysis techniques. Primary data was collected from internal hotel documents and staff questionnaire. The analysis includes both qualitative and quantitative components, using tools such as Excel and JASP to perform descriptive and frequency analysis, along with boxplot visualisation methods. The second chapter will also discuss the population and sampling.

The third chapter presents the results, discussion, and recommendations. The chapter contains detailed data of the twenty events selected for analysis, focusing on planning variables of preparation time, budget, and task allocation, which are examined in relation to guest satisfaction scores. Boxplots are used as illustrative tools to explore data distribution and compare group differences visually. Additional descriptive data on attendance and repeat guest percentages are also included for broader context. Staff feedback was analysed to identify common planning challenges, planning gaps and potential areas for improvement. The discussion connects these findings to the thesis objectives and relevant literature, confirming that strategic planning significantly influences event outcomes. The recommendations section includes five recommendations for improving the event management practices, based on the data and qualitative information, which include extending preparation time, adapting budgets to event complexity, improving communication, enhancing staff training, and incorporating predictive analytics.

The conclusion section provides key findings and reflections on the use of strategic planning to improve event management in hotels, as well as suggestions for future research on strategic planning in hotel event management.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Theoretical Foundations of Strategic Planning and Event Management

1.1.1. Theoretical Foundations of Strategic Planning

In the origins of strategic planning, these planning processes came from military strategy, which was adopted in the business sector in the mid-20th century. Chandler defined strategy as “the determination of the long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals” (Crainer & Dearlove, 2003, p. 32). He believed that entities, upon identifying their strategy, may afterwards determine the most suitable organisational structure for implementing it.

Strategic planning is defined as a deliberate, structured process intended to inform important decisions and actions that shape, direct and influence the identity, activities and objectives of the organisation, or institution. Strategic planning entails reviewing an organisations's mandate, mission and values, examining both the internal and external environments, identifying strategic issues based on that review, and creating strategies, goals and plans to address those issues (Bryson 2011).

Strategic planning is frequently linked to strategic management, aiming to establish a planning process and implementation within a continuous cycle of alignment. Various scholars have provided distinct definitions of strategic planning within the context of organisations. The United Nations (2019) describes strategic planning as an approach of comprehending an organisations's future, while analyzing trends and challenges affecting strategic priorities. This includes assessing the objectives of the organisations and subsequent groups, divisions, and units to ensure that each aligns with a broader, overarching strategy, thereby aiding in the likelihood of achieving a desired result. Organisations with coherent strategies appear to enhance focus, accountability, and results.

Maleka (2014) defines strategic planning as the blueprint that an organisations will follow to achieve its objectives. When an organisations develops a strategic plan, its purpose is to identify goals and activities that will enable the organisations to meet predetermined objectives. The strategic plan provides communication around an organisations's priorities, actions needed, and some of the key elements of the plan. This author identifies that strategic planning involves setting priorities, utilizing human resources, improving operations, and ensuring that employees and stakeholders remain focused on collective goals and are able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Strategic planning is a process in which an organisations formulates the objectives for its foreseeable future, and then determines an organised outline to achieve the objectives. This will include a generalised outcome and indicate the activity required to achieve the outcome. This process, in part, will ensure that

the day-to-day operations of an organisations can be carried out in a manner that remains consistent with its mission and that has the organisations's vision of the longer term in mind. (Gutterman, 2023).

Some significant theoretical models are significant during the development of a strategic plan:

- 1 Porter's Five Forces Model is a strategic approach designed to analyse the competitive factors that frame each industry and help determine an organisation's position in it. As described by Ndzabukelwako et al. (2024), the model includes five key dimensions: the threat of new entrants, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers, and rivalry between existing competitors. Each of these forces affects the intensity of competition and, ultimately, profitability and strategic positioning. In summary, the analysis of the forces informs organisations of the threats and opportunities they could work to use to their advantage, by developing a strategy to secure a competitive advantage.
- 2 The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory focuses on internal firm-level resources as the basis for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. Mailani et al. (2024) describe RBV posits as a theory regarding valuable, rare, non-imitable, and non-substitutable. This includes tangible resources such as financial, physical, technological, and organisational assets, along with intangible resources such as labour capital, innovation, and credibility. This bundle of factors, along with other capacity and capability of the firm and external opportunities from the environment, create the basis for strategic choice and ultimately the sustainability of competitive advantage.
- 3 SWOT Analysis. SWOT analysis allows the evaluation of the internal strengths and weaknesses, along with the external opportunities and threats. It is thus a strategic tool to allow the internal resources of an organisations (companies) to match external market opportunity and demand so that informed decisions are taken to gain benefit from (Gutterman, 2023).
- 4 Mintzberg introduced the concept of Emergent Strategy as a contrast to deliberate strategy, emphasizing that strategy can develop over time as organisations learn and adapt to their environments. According to James (2018, p. 2), emergent strategy

“focuses on strategic learning and moves away from notions of direction and control, the latter being the focus of deliberate strategy ... it involves the organisations's ability to receive and interpret messages from its operational environment in a dynamic way, which enables the organisations to adapt its actions and direction if deemed appropriate”.

James (2018, p. 3) further notes that “plans that detail a deliberate strategy to be followed often become out of date before they can be implemented” and instead encourages flexibility and pattern recognition in real-time situations, as originally conceptualised.

1.1.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Event Management

Event management is broadly defined as the organisation and coordination of all activities required to achieve an event's objectives, whether the gathering is a small community celebration or a large-scale international festival (Bladen et al., 2018). Scholars define events and event management in various ways, emphasizing different aspects of the practice.

Recent scholarship continues to explore the dual perspectives that shape event experiences. From the attendee's viewpoint, events are often understood as meaningful opportunities for emotional engagement, cultural enrichment, and memory formation. Biaett and Richards (2020) emphasise that experiences lie at the heart of event management, yet are often underexplored in terms of their qualitative depth and emotional significance. Similarly, Meade et al. (2024) demonstrate that unique events produce richer episodic memories and improve emotional well-being, highlighting the role of distinctiveness and novelty in shaping memorable encounters.

In contrast, organisers view events through a strategic lens as mechanisms for achieving visibility, brand positioning, and stakeholder engagement. Richards et al. (2025) discuss the strategic design of events within a broader discourse on knowledge gaps, noting how planning practices must balance experiential aims with institutional and operational objectives. This contrast between participant meaning-making and organiser intention reveals the multifaceted nature of events as both curated experiences and strategic instruments.

Event management is a rapidly growing professional field that emphasizes the role of research in improving the success of events. While much of the focus has traditionally been on areas like logistics, staging, and marketing, there is increasing interest in understanding the social impact of events and how they influence communities and participants (Mair & Whitford, 2013).

In practical terms, event management describes the management of planning and organizing everything necessary to host a successful and enjoyable event. Event management is a form of project management where a unique and meaningful experience is produced in association with the event. It involves establishing goals, identifying a target audience, selecting a venue, developing an agenda, designing marketing strategies, building a team, and managing logistical requirements (Shone & Parry, 2013).

Event management also incorporates the finer details, which include, but are not limited to, budgeting, risk management, securing speakers, planning decor, liaising with catering and others. Normally, an event manager will ensure everything runs according to plan. The key to a successful event is planning ahead and having some time to design to go through the details of the event. All the elements should come together into a seamless step that will create an experience a participant would remember and feel unique. (Shone & Parry, 2013)

The theoretical foundation of event management is rooted in the broader evolution of management thought. Contemporary scholars maintain that effective event planning benefits substantially from an appreciation of the development across three principal schools of management theory: classical, neoclassical, and modern (Thirumal et al., 2025).

The classical school of management theory centres on operational efficiency, organisational hierarchy, and clearly delineated roles. It champions structured planning, division of labour, and command unity, all of which continue to inform the logistics and administrative framework of event operations (Thirumal et al., 2025).

Building upon classical principles, the neoclassical perspective introduces the significance of human behaviour, social interaction, and employee well-being. This orientation is particularly salient in event contexts where interpersonal relations and team motivation directly influence outcomes (Thirumal et al., 2025).

The modern approach integrates theories such as systems thinking, contingency frameworks, and adaptive leadership. It promotes flexibility, interconnected processes, and responsiveness essential for navigating the uncertainties and real-time demands of contemporary event management (Thirumal et al., 2025).

Thomas and Stephens (2022) developed the KT Model of Event Management, which considers the influences of intragroup and environmental variables, including background conditions, decision-making biases, and situational triggers. The KT Model emphasizes the dynamic support for attention to flexibility and strategically addressing environmental variability in a changing world.

Event Systems Theory, developed by Morgeson, Mitchell and Liu (2015), explains how certain events emerge more quickly through the surprising nature, distress and relevance of an event. The explanation suggests that the degrees events can impact organisational behaviour with adaptive anticipatory behavior conscious of challenge and opportunities. This perspective encourage event managers to plan strategically while creating adaptive behaviours to a changing environment.

The potential to combine these theories provides a framework for developing a comprehensive approach to event management, enhancing both strategic and operational success.

1.2. Importance of Strategic Planning in Event Management

1.2.1. Definition of Strategic Planning in Hospitality

Strategic planning in the hospitality is a formal, forward-thinking framework to help hotels, resorts and tourism organisations articulate long-term objectives and decisions, explore internal capacity and

external conditions, and determine tactical paths of action within performance limits to achieve competitive advantage. Strategic planning is important to the hospitality industry due to frequent changes of customer preferences, economic instability; shift in technology; and global competition. In hospitality operations, strategic planning means more than just setting goals (Phillips and Moutinho, 2014).

Strategic planning means that organisational resources, service, labour force and market needs are in alignment. Phillips and Moutinho (2014) express that strategic planning encompasses all that is coordinated in business planning at the destination, which includes private and public actors. While this makes planning more complex in the industry, it is necessary. Planning allows hospitality partners to be proactive rather than reactive. For example, it helps hotel managers plan for low seasons in advance, adjust service models, while engaging contingency plans for possible crises such as declines in international travel or supply chain interruptions. The planning process even identifies analysis segments by market, finds brand strategies, or digital transformation priorities, and guest experience/satisfaction enhancement.

Strategic planning in the hospitality industry is inherently future-focused and encourages proactive rather than reactive thinking (Maemunah et al., 2023). Strategic planning is a structured way by which hotel managers identify long-term goals, assess the current operating environment and establish clear strategies to achieve desired operational outcomes. As noted by Maemunah, Wijaya and Sukmadi (2023), effective strategic planning enables hotel management to keep up with changes and challenges, prioritise actions and ensure that each department operates within the overall business strategy. Strategic planning allows for a systematic planning process that can also accommodate new circumstances and the need to continuously compete in a rapidly changing environment.

Additionally, as Ugwu and Hkay (2021) have articulated, strategic planning not only provides a true unifying vision, among both departments in hospitality, but it can allow hotel management and leaders to better understand the functional needs and desires of guests, and to plan to take action, while also creating a union of shared departments. In the context of where the hospitality industry can be heading and how to better serve its consumers, even simple questions like "where are we now?" or "where do we want to go?" can prove useful. Even basic examples, like identifying new guest preferences, can guide improvements.

Other studies show that one of the most valuable outcomes of strategic planning is that it helps organisations learn and grow over time. By planning ahead, businesses are better able to adapt and innovate as customer needs and expectations continue to change (Phillips & Moutinho, 2014).

Through strategic planning, hospitality organisations have more structure, but also flexibility, that equally empowers talented people to create value for customers and other stakeholders, regardless of operational challenges. It also gives hospitality organisations more agility to respond to environmental changes, and to build operational capacity to rapidly develop plans that have longevity, lower risk, and support sustainable organisations growth (Ugwu & Hkay, 2021).

1.2.2 Role of Strategic Planning in Event Management

Strategic planning is a central part of successful event management, serving as a framework for aligning organisational goals, use its resources, and satisfy the expectations of different stakeholders. Rather than just handling day-to-day decisions, strategic planning allows organizers to think ahead, anticipate challenges, and coordinate the various moving parts of an event in a thoughtful and goal-oriented way.

A key aspect of strategic planning is the Event Management Plan (EMP). Thomas and Stephens (2022) explain that the EMP provides the fundamental framework of the event as a whole. The EMP integrates important planning information, such as timeline, contacts, logistics, budget, legal considerations, and risk. When used effectively, the EMP helps the planning team stay organised and ensures that everyone involved is working from the same page (Thomas & Stephens, 2022).

Strategic planning plays an even bigger role in smaller, locally organised events. These events may operate with reduced staff and funding yet are still important for tourism and the community. Beridze et al. (2023, p. 94) highlight that "local and regional events can play an important role in attracting visitors, increasing length of stay and increasing visitor spending."

Sponsorship strategy planning is relevant to strategic planning as well. With decreased reliability of public funding, events increasingly become heavily dependent upon sponsorship. Because of this dependency, event managers need to consider how they will plan their event to ensure the event's brand and image connect to the sponsoring brand and image. A strong connection between the two can improve both the audience experience and the sponsors' visibility. Beridze et al. (2023, p. 98) state that an important factor in an event is audience perception, which directly relates to visitor satisfaction and desire to return.

Strategic planning also helps navigate complex and varying stakeholder group relationships (government bodies, local businesses, sponsors, and event attendees), which all have differing motivations. Coordinative relationships and responsibilities should be established during the planning phase in order for the event to respond to the needs and interests of all parties involved (Beridze et al., 2023). Beridze et al. (2023, p. 96) state that "communication between people is an important element in maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders and limiting hidden conflicts."

A strong example of planned strategic planning is the KT Model of Event Management. This model is structured in four distinct phases: concept development, planning, event execution, and post-event analysis. The KT model strongly encourages that evaluation should not be confined to post-event analysis, but rather, assessment, reviews, and feedback should occur in every phase of the planning process. Many times, through the pressures of time and the quick turning over of many events, this phase can be bypassed (Thomas & Stephens, 2022).

Strategic planning offers event organizers a level of organisations and foresight that is required to develop well-run events that reach the intended impact. If event organizers want to be intentional with limited resources, develop relationships between the community and event, network with sponsors, or

develop a tourism strategy, engaging in strategic planning is one of the most powerful tools in the event manager's toolbox.

1.3. Challenges in Strategic Planning for Event Management

1.3.1. Internal and External Challenges

Strategic event planning in the hospitality industry is influenced by a range of internal and external challenges that can significantly affect its success. Internal challenges typically stem from within the organisations, such as limitations in leadership, organisational culture, coordination issues, or staff resistance to change. In contrast, external challenges arise from the broader environment, such as market volatility, policy changes, economic downturns, technological advancements, and competitive pressures. Recognizing and addressing both dimensions is crucial for creating resilient and responsive strategic event plans.

Kinyua and Koech (2025) highlight the vital role of strategic fit defined, as the effective alignment between an organisation's internal capabilities and the conditions of its external environment, as a fundamental factor influencing firm performance. They contend that in fast-paced and highly competitive sectors, businesses are continuously challenged to reconcile their internal structures with evolving market dynamics. According to their analysis, the degree to which internal resources and competencies are aligned with external demands significantly impacts organisational effectiveness. This reinforces the view that internal-external alignment is not a static achievement, but rather a continuous strategic challenge, particularly pertinent to hospitality event management, where fluctuating market conditions, shifting guest expectations, and internal coordination demands all require constant recalibration of strategic priorities.

In line with this, Makuthu (2021), articulates that five-star hotels, in Kenya, encounter internal failures including lack of clear strategic intent, rigid structures of leadership, and lack of department alignment which impacts the strategic intent by not allowing for execution change. At the same time, these hotels are addressing the external factors of global economic uncertainty, digital disruption, as well as consumer preferences. These external factors create a level of instability in long-term planning, and cause hotels to continuously revisit and adjust event strategies.

From a risk management perspective, Tiwari (2024) points out that hospitality businesses face many external challenges such as natural disasters, pandemics, technological failures, and more which essential components of strategic crisis management. Tiwari's work highlights proactive preparedness, environmental scanning, and scenario planning as essential components of strategic crisis management. These practices encourage hospitality businesses to anticipate and react to risk and relying on reactive approaches which addresses longer term organisational resilience and stakeholder trust.

Matuszak-Flejszman and Paliwod (2022) reinforce the link between internal and external environments in the strategic decision process. They argue that organisational effectiveness relies on the awareness of internal governance structures, and accountabilities while all informed internally of external to organisations legal, technological, economic and societal contexts. A clear awareness or engagement in either the internal, external dichotomy could impact long-term strategic success and expose organisations to reputational risks and operational risks.

In a related area of study, Arif and Hossin (2016) compare two hotels: Hotel Hyatt in the UK, Hotel The Cox Today in Bangladesh, illustrating the findings of using strategic diagnostic tools, including SWOT, PESTLE, and Porter's Five Forces, in evaluating findings in emerging market hotels. They emphasize the importance of context-aware strategic formulation, stating that "in more and more competitive and changing world, comprehending the understanding of internal and external environments of an organisation becomes more important than ever before" (Arif & Hossin, 2016, p. 13).

They find comparable internal pressures, including a lack of technology and a lack of employee infrastructure, as weaknesses for hotel management strategy. External pressures, including regulatory pressure on hotels, competition pressures on hotels, and economic uncertainty, add complexity to achieving strategic objectives. The comparison highlights the systemic relationship between internal weaknesses and external volatility that significantly undermines hotel event planning in dynamic market environments.

1.3.2. Operational and Managerial Challenges

Strategic planning provides a foundation for long-enduring goals in hotel event management. However, how strategic plans are enacted will frequently be hindered by several operational and managerial issues, which can take the form of real-time logistics, staffing logistics, budget mismanagement, communication handling, and the gap between strategic planning and action. Unless operational and managerial issues are addressed, event strategic planning is not executed effectively.

Lai et al. (2023) note that many international tourist hotels often face internal coordination issues and unclear staff roles, specifically during high-volume events. They further explain that the lack of these procedures and functional communication often severely inhibit task completion, particularly in multi-departmental teams. Additionally, they noted that operational planning often suffers from delays to agile responsiveness as the outcome of hierarchical bottlenecks and limited delegation, which complicate quick implementation of changing event requirements.

Related to internal attrition, Köseoglu et al. (2025) further illustrate how international tourist hotels 'test' their strategies in practice, revealing governance structures that inhibit effective decision-making. The authors state that hotel managers work under top-down directed governance structures that inhibits effective decision making and creates tension between strategic plans and operational planning. Tension

can become particularly acute in events contexts, where some decisions must be made in a timely manner from the onset of the event, and especially for a designation a leadership decision-making authority and accountability.

Ugwu (2021) offers insight in evaluation of strategic planning implementation in the hospitality industry in South East Nigeria. Ugwu states that, weak staffing structures, delays in resource allocations and a limited level of engagement in managers at both the middle and lower levels have made the ideal of attaining strategic goals extraordinarily difficult in the industry.

Similar to the studies mentioned above, Ugwu shows how hospitality organisations rely heavily on senior staff and managers, which in conjunction with reducing scope of role agreement of non-senior staff, caused confusion and ineffectiveness of service delivery, especially at events. These studies addressed the need for cohesion and operational coherence within the strategic design, allowing for improved responsiveness to client expectations during event-based service delivery.

Collectively, these studies emphasize that the successful implementation of strategic planning in hotel event management is contingent upon robust internal coordination, operational coherence, and the capacity to respond adaptively to evolving demands. In the absence of these internal enablers, strategic plans risk remaining conceptual frameworks with limited practical application.

1.4. Best Practices for Strategic Event Planning

1.4.1. Technology Integration and Efficiency

The incorporation of technology into hotel event management continues to be a key pillar of strategic planning, especially as consumer expectations evolve in the post-pandemic world. Technology enhances operational functions and is evolving the experience of guests by personalizing it for travelers. As hotels try to produce more efficient and memorable occasions, digital transformation develops into a necessity and a strategic initiative, not just a choice (Das, 2024).

One of the major advances of technology can be found in the guest-facing arena, particularly through contactless and digital service delivery, which has become central to modern hospitality rather than just a novel feature. The need for contactless and digital service has been enhanced through public health concerns and new guest preferences. Das (2024) references mobile check-ins, AI-driven concierge services, and smart-room capabilities as advancements that improve customer experience while increasing operational productivity. In fact, these improvements lessen the time involved, eliminate unnecessary face-to-face engagement, and streamline internal operations during high-capacity events.

Beyond guest-facing technology, back-end advancements have stimulated event planning in hotels. Predictive analytics has developed very quickly into a very powerful tool for forecasting operations and even resources. Anubala (2023) notes that hotels significantly benefit from predictive analytics by

proactively determining guest need, securitizing staffing patterns, determining room price and optimizing marketing efforts based on prior behavior and market demand data. Moving to analytical decision-making minimizes uncertainty inherent in event management.

Technology is being applied strategically to support innovation in achieving long-term hospitality objectives. Giannoukou (2024) emphasizes while technology adoption is necessary, it should not overlook the essence of hospitality and the warm, personalised and engagement elements of effective hospitality service. Hotels that innovate and create environments that do not diminish hospitality standards are more likely to re-engage customers and positively affect event satisfaction performance metrics than their competitors.

Another area that has increased in importance of technology integration is organisational communication and workflow. Event planners are increasingly turning towards cloud-based collaborative platforms and real-time communication applications to align with marketing and logistics crews to their kitchen and front desk operations. These integrated workflow systems help strengthen transparency and accountability across departments, while reducing information silos

Even though there are many benefits regarding technology integration. Das (2024) and Anubala (2023) emphasize the importance of considering financial investment, training demands, cybersecurity risks, and system maintenance. Any systematic plan and cost return-on-investment that cannot account for cost or system underutilisation can drain valuable company resources.

At the conclusion, the incorporation of strategic technology will improve both guest experiences and enhance operational efficiency as discussed earlier, especially when supported by real-time predictive analytics and principles of product/service innovations. The key to incorporating technology is not the technological tools you are likely to use in hotel event planning, but applying them to longer-term hospitality values and strategic goals that align and support them. Innovation must also align, and consistency is an important factor of successful delivery of services.

1.4.2 Risk Management and Contingency Planning

Risk management has emerged as a vital aspect of hotel event management to ensure continuity of operations, guest customer satisfaction, and the protection of hospitality businesses' brand reputation. As Donbak (2022, as cited in Baratsas & Tzavaras, 2023, p. 19) notes, "the tourism sector is extremely vulnerable to internal and external crises," which reinforces Makhoul et al.'s (2020) argument that the ability to predict, mitigate, and respond to risks must be incorporated into sustainable operational strategies.

Hotel event operations experience a range of risks from internal factors, including staffing shortages and supply chain disruptions, to external factors including political upheaval, pandemics and natural disasters. Baratsas and Tzavaras (2023) contend that both financial and non-financial risks, such as

fiscal discrepancies, environmental disruptions, political instability, and health-related incidents, continually impact hotel operations in all destinations worldwide. The authors draw from their own synthesis of research conducted in 4 and 5 star hotels across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East to conclude that risk-sharing models and contingency frameworks are essential to both the survival and resilience of hospitality operations.

The use of Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) is one widely used response, utilizing an integrated, top-down approach to identify and mitigate risk across departments. As Baratsas and Tzavaras (2023) note, with ERM, businesses are better able to anticipate threats (e.g. booking cancellations, supply chain disruptions, reputational damage) and manage them proactively. This aligns with their observation that ERM not only enables proactive management but also fosters long-term strategic resilience. Service quality management provides a complementary predictive framework and plays a direct role in reducing operational risk by increasing standardisation, reliability, and guest satisfaction.

Kobyak and Skobkin (2020) contend that improved hotel service quality constitutes a risk mitigation strategy by reducing guest dissatisfaction, checking compliance, and producing more consistency in reliability overall. For example, the use of other ISO-like quality control systems helps standardize procedures across hotel departments, thereby reducing variation and potential legal exposure.

At the same time, Makhoul et al. (2020) also argue that strategic contingency planning- including the establishment of emergency evacuation protocols, procuring backup options for vendors or service suppliers, conducting health safety procedures, etc., represents an additional factor that enhances hotels' resilience to crisis events. Further embedding contingency and compliance protocols within day-to-day operational practices assists in mitigating vulnerabilities triggered by unexpected circumstances, while also advancing the long-term sustainability of hotel events.

The role of investing in technology is another important and viable risk response solution by helping identify and respond to risks in their early stages. Baratsas and Tzavaras (2023) discusses how the use of technology to implement real-time monitoring systems, automation of booking systems, and contactless service interfaces, among other uses of technology, allowed hotels to be agile in adapting operation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, (and to unpredictable response to unpredictable crisis or natural disaster circumstances). Additionally, practices such as outsourcing event preparation services, placing relevant insurance policies, and establishing service level agreements (SLAs) have become standard risk mitigation options in hotel operations (Baratsas & Tzavaras, 2023). As noted by Baratsas and Tzavaras (2023), these measures represent common strategies of risk transfer and operational continuity in times of disruption.

Hotels that commit to comprehensive risk management frameworks-integrating forecasting using data, assurance of service quality, crisis preparedness and response, and organisational communication are in a stronger position to maintain their reputation and ensure long-term competitiveness in hospitality.

Regular review and updating of the frameworks are necessary to address emerging risks and trends including global health risks or geopolitical instability (Baratsas & Tzavaras, 2023; Makhoul et al., 2020).

1.4.3. Sustainability and Innovation in Event Planning

Sustainability is increasingly recognised as a strategic necessity in the hospitality and event industries, moving beyond its earlier perception as an optional or trend-driven initiative (Seočanac, 2023). As a result of increased awareness of environmental and social responsibility, hotels are increasingly being asked to practice event management following sustainable development goals. This transition is not just an ethical concern but a strategic value to the hotel, as they must meet regulatory expectations and appeal to a growing clientele seeking environmentally responsible policies for their selected venue (Seočanac, 2023).

Green event planning can be driven by both internal and external motivators. Internally, hotels may implement initiatives such as waste diversion, energy savings, and local procurement to discover their options to minimize their carbon footprint. Externally, stakeholders, including corporations and individuals attending the events, expect the venue to be environmentally responsible and utilize practices such as eco-certifications, recycling programs, and environmental awareness initiatives (Seočanac, 2023). As venues adopt green event practices that contribute to an improved environmental profile, the hotels also cultivate loyalty from guests who value sustainability.

Effective leadership is key to successfully embedding sustainability into event strategies. Pernecky (2015) identifies the use of the Rhineland/Honeybee leadership model to support implementing sustainability into event management. The model supports longer-term thinking, stakeholder engagement, collaborative thinking, and ethical governance. These elements are contrasting to short-term, profit-oriented approaches and offer a wider, more integrated stakeholder-centred lens to support initiatives that have environmental and social outcomes. Sustainable leadership also means supporting investment in people, teaching cross-department training, and developing a broader vision beyond financial outcomes (Pernecky, 2015).

Innovation serves as an important enabler of a sustainable shift in event management. As an example, virtual and hybrid event models could be used more to reduce travel requirements with a beneficial environmental impact and make events more accessible to all participants (Mair & Smith, 2021).

According to Mair and Smith (2021), “events can perform this role... by providing direct experiences of more sustainable lifestyles or communities” (p. 1742), which reinforces that events will encourage behaviour change instead of simply being a delivery mechanism.

Several types of smart technology have been utilised for energy management, conversions toward paperless check-in and signage, and resource management, both to reduce resource consumption and improve efficiency. These are also part of managing sustainability as an event operation. Predictive analytics can also be used to enhance decision-making from a sustainability framework. By

demonstrating predictive analytic tools, Anubala (2023) quantitatively analysed how predictive analytics supports a reduction in over-preparing, avoidance of waste, and improved supply chain efficiency to improve sustainability and cost of event operations. This approach to data-focused analytical decisions allows the event planner to focus on becoming sustainable.

Although the exact strategies for implementing sustainability may vary, successful integration often requires coordinated efforts that include thoughtful planning, staff engagement, and collaboration with local stakeholders. These elements contribute to more authentic and impactful sustainability practices in event management, aligning with the increasing expectations placed on venues to operate responsibly (Seočanac, 2023).

In summary, sustainability and innovation are becoming two sides of the same coin when it comes to strategic event planning. Through long-term leadership models, advanced technological innovations, and stakeholder involvement across all levels, hotels can build event experiences that are meaningful and responsible. This goes beyond their ethical obligations and helps to build brand reputation and long-term sustainability in a competitive, values-driven environment.

1.5. Internship Company and Internship Role

1.5.1 Hotel Profile and Strategic Approach

The Hotel Seaside Los Jameos is a four-star hotel located in Puerto del Carmen, Lanzarote. The hotel is a member of the Seaside Collection hotel group, which is known for luxury service, sustainability, and promoting the local region. The hotel location serves quality, peaceful experiences with easy access to shops, nightlife, and tourist attractions, thus making the hotel suitable for family and leisure tourism. The Seaside Los Jameos has 530 rooms in different categories, and the hotel has many available facilities, including a wellness centre, areas of sport, children's areas, a main restaurant and bars. The hotel also has flexible event spaces, with the capability to hold both private and corporate events. These facilities allow the hotel to function as a multi-use venue for leisure tourism as well as planned events (Seaside Los Jameos Playa, 2022).

The hotel has a planned renovation in 2025, aimed at potentially moving to a five-star category, which is both a significant investment and significant validation of Seaside's strong interest and desire for a competitive positioning as an innovative and quality establishment for sustainability, design, and digital applications.

At Seaside Los Jameos, the strategic management model is a centralised business model where the central functions are the functions of finance, marketing, procurement, etc. This structure supports consistency and efficiency across Seaside Collection properties while allowing for local flexibility in operational execution. Events of the hotel are considered a strategic management tool, not simply a

necessity of operating, and should be used to promote guest experience, foster brand loyalty, and promote an identity for the hotel.

Below, you can observe the SWOT analysis of the hotel Seaside Los Jameos (Table 1).

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Seaside Los Jameos.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Main beachfront location	High cost of renovation
Strong branding	Dependency on European source markets
Certified sustainability initiatives (e.g., Travelife Gold)	Seasonal variances
Variety of leisure and event venues	Not enough space for future development
Opportunities	Threats
Growing demand for sustainable tourism	Increasing energy and labour costs
Five-star repositioning after renovations	Competitive hospitality market
New partnerships with local businesses	Global travel uncertainty
Innovation in digital and sustainable tourism	Regulatory changes in environmental policy

Source: Author's elaboration.

This SWOT analysis affirms the hotel's strategic priority dimensions concerning its goals, particularly concerning sustainability, guest experience, and event-led marketing. This constitutes a favorable context to explore the influence of strategic planning for hospitality event management.

1.5.2 Internship Role and Involvement in Strategic Event Planning

The internship, conducted from October 15, 2024, to January 15, 2025, within the Public Relations and Management Department of Seaside Los Jameos, lasted a total of 63 working days, amounting to approximately 504 hours of practice experience. This immersive internship provided with valuable opportunities to observe and assist with the strategic planning processes and implementation of hospitality events in a practical context. Although the role was strictly defined as an intern, there was an active involvement in the strategic implementation of hotel events through coordination activities to patrons, while also aiding with pre-event and post-event planning activities.

Throughout the internship, participation extended in a variety of activities that contributed to significant details of event execution, particularly during high-profile hotel events such as:

1. The 30th Anniversary Event – branding and milestone event
2. Halloween 2024 – seasonal, family-friendly programming
3. Christmas/New Year 2024/2025 – holiday logistics for operations and entertainment
4. Thematic events

In addition, attendance in pre-event planning meetings allowed to discuss event objectives, timelines, and logistics. These meetings included hotel supervisors and teams from other departments. This planning specifically contributed to understanding how hotels strategically align events with branding objectives, segmentation of the hotel guests, and seasonal patterns of demand.

During the pre-event preparation phase, contributions included:

1. Preparation of materials and set-up or assembly of the event
2. Aiding in the preparation and distribution of event-related information, both printed and digital.
3. Editing guest information with requests for special services into the hotel's system.
4. Observing how event spaces, guest movement and timelines are conceptualised and operated in hotel events.

This demonstrates that the hotel planned events with the guest experience inherent and ensured that each detail of the event paid attention to the guests' needs to create a positive outcome.

Event Execution and Guest Experience

On event days, responsibilities included:

1. Assisting with decorating the venue and set-up for the event.
2. Assisting with the welcoming of guests and assisting attendees throughout the event.
3. Observing guests with satisfaction and addressing problems during the event in real time.
4. Coordinating with supervisors to ensure smooth execution of the schedule.

Also, during major events, support was provided to the frontline experience of guests by answering guest questions, assisting with the entertainment flow and observing the way that plans progressed into operations.

Further contributions included:

1. Managing guest concerns and engaging in the escalation process
2. Assisting with the food service logistics and forecasting the flow of guests
3. Supporting last-minute updates and communicating changes to the team.

In addition, engagement continued in post-event review and debriefings, where teams reflect and provide feedback from events and evaluate the opportunities to improve and performance.

Responsibilities during this phase included:

1. Summarizing feedback from guests and categorizing the complaints for issues

2. Participating in team debriefings with the team to measure whether goals were reached for the event

From this synthesis of practical involvement and theoretical observation into practical scenarios, the internship provided relevant experiences both for framing the overall research direction of this thesis and specifically analyzing the application of strategic planning principles to hotel event management.

1.5.3. Environmental Sustainability Initiatives of the Hotel

Environmental sustainability is a defining element of Seaside Los Jameos' operational and strategic model. The hotel has adopted a multi-pronged sustainability strategy that considers resource efficiency, waste minimisation, and guest education. In so doing, the hotel manifests a commitment to responsible tourism while contributing to a competitive positioning strategy that distinguishes the hotel in the Canary Islands market.

Operational Sustainability Programs

Seaside Los Jameos energy system includes solar thermal and aerothermal technologies, which accounted for 21% and 28% of hot water production, respectively, by 2022 (Seaside Los Jameos Playa, 2022).

Other initiatives include:

1. LED lighting and motion sensors in low-traffic areas;
2. Heat recovery from HVAC systems,
3. Pool heating through recirculation systems.

Water management strategies include the use of Smartvatten leak detection to avoid unnecessary water, drip irrigation, and optimised laundry strategies. The decorative fountains and pools are controlled by timers and utilize non-toxic evaporation to further reduce consumption.

The hotel aims to reduce waste through:

1. Buffet re-design to reduce food waste,
2. Move away from single-use plastics,
3. Use of concentrated and refillable cleaning products,
4. Plans to convert organic waste to then to biogas for on-site burners.

The hotel has an external consultancy, Serendipia, who regularly monitor and evaluates the hotel's sustainability indicators, allowing for transparency and continuous improvement in environmental performance (Seaside Los Jameos Playa, 2022).

Between August 2024 and February 2025, the hotel implemented a monthly sustainability program designed to engage guests and staff through themed educational events. These activities are in keeping with the hotel's desire to manage sustainability as a responsibility and enhancement of the experience of their guest (Seaside Los Jameos Playa, 2024).

The monthly themes established in August corresponded to the hotel's sustainability commitment and strategic goals. Thus, in August, the KM 0 Gastronomy campaign in the hotel showcased tastings from local food producers with the intention of reducing food miles and plastic consumption by offering guests refillable containers instead of plastic.

In September, the theme was Resource Efficiency, and the hotel offered guests an optional program to reduce room-cleaning, along with QR-code communication and video screenings of environmental documentaries.

In October, the Ocean Lava Challenge was the theme, and the campaign included beach clean-ups, environmental photography contests, and guest participation in activities that had an eco-theme.

In November, Sustainability Education initiatives such as guided visits to local waste facilities, guest surveys, and staff debates fostered awareness and internal dialogue.

In December, the Guardianes del Océano campaign featured children's recycling workshops and a film screening of Wall-E to inspire conservation values for marine environments.

In January, the emphasis was on Sustainable Mobility, featuring bike maintenance workshops, photo challenge initiatives, and wellness-based options.

In February, the hotel dedicated to Biodiversity Awareness by offering guided tours of the garden and plant-growth workshops to illustrate the ecological importance of native plant species.

The monthly themed offerings related to sustainability are focused on the hotel's mission to reduce its environmental impact while engaging with guests, educating guests and staff, and promoting values of the local community. They also relate to international goals as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (for example, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 13: Climate Action).

From the perspective of strategic management and planning, the program captures a fully integrated approach, whereby the organisations's theme of sustainability permeates all aspects of event design, guest engagement, and hotel branding of guest experience. The Seaside Los Jameos shows how strategic planning in the hospitality sector can be realised through sustainability operations, guest engagement integration, and event programming. The learning experience also provided a microcosm of a demonstration of how event planning goes hand in hand with strategic positional or organisational objectives, emphasizing the importance of intentional, operational, strategic coordination, and reflection based on the journey.

Overall, through its level of sustainability practices, sustainability as an ongoing practice demonstrates to guests and participants that every connection made is an evaluation of practice and reaction, denoting lessons learned and the possible alteration of the subsequent practice. The hotel is demonstrable evidence that strategic planning is not an abstract reflectivity on the practice of the experience but one that is integrated into the sustainability practices of sustainability onboarding, development, framing, recreation, and operational story that respond contextually within the momentum of moving forward as part of every department, guest relations, and business mechanism.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to understand the impact of strategic planning on the effectiveness of hotel event management. In particular, the impact of planning, including preparation time, resource allocation, and task coordination, on performance dimensions such as guest satisfaction and operational success. The research is organised around three objectives:

O₁: Investigate the importance of strategic planning in hotel event management.

O₂: Assessing challenges and solutions faced by hotel event planners.

O₃: Proposing best practices for strategic planning in hotel events.

To address these objectives, the following section outlines the data collection methods, analysis techniques, population and sampling approach employed in this study.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

This study applies a case study approach supported by participant observation, based on actual involvement in planning and delivery of hotel events during an internship at the Hotel Seaside Los Jameos. The case study research emphasises careful contextual examination of a limited number of events and their relationships, and is therefore well-suited for assessing strategic level planning in real-world hotel (Çakar & Aykol, 2021).

Data for this study was collected from two sources: internal event documentation and database records, and a structured questionnaire distributed to event-related staff. The analysis was based on twenty (20) significant hotel events that occurred in 2024 and was obtained through purposive sampling, which included selection based on sufficient data. The events were not identified by name but were identified as event numbers (Event 1 to Event 20). It also included planning variables such as budget allocations, preparation timelines, task assignments, guest attendance, satisfaction scores, and return business. These data were gathered directly from internal hotel records and planning documentation, with support from a hotel supervisor. This dataset served as the primary base for descriptive analysis and was compiled and organised in Microsoft Excel to ensure consistent formatting prior to analysis.

To obtain this data, a structured questionnaire was created and distributed via Google Forms to hotel staff involved in events, such as guest relations, as well as managers. Participants were invited to respond anonymously, with no personal information collected. Seven responses were received. Although the sample size was small, the respondents were directly involved in planning or executing events, which made their insights especially relevant.

The questionnaire was self-designed based on the study's objectives, with efforts to ensure clarity, alignment with research aims, and appropriate response formats. Although it was not formally pilot-tested, the instrument was reviewed for consistency and clarity before distribution. The structure followed general guidance for clear and purposeful survey design, consistent with recommendations by Petrovic, Jones, and Smith (2023).

The fully structured questionnaire contained twenty-two (22) questions, including nineteen (19) multiple-choice questions and three (3) open-ended questions (Appendix A). The questionnaire design was based on the three research objectives and included questions related to staff roles, scheduling priorities, problems encountered, team cooperation, guest feedback, and improvement strategies. Frequency analysis was performed on the staff responses using Microsoft Excel to identify patterns. Some questions allowed for multiple answers, which explains why in some cases the frequency totals exceeded the number of respondents.

The total questionnaire structure (without response data) is provided in Appendix A. According to Lim et al. (2023, p. 3749), "Google Forms is an online application that can be accessed for free to facilitate the collection of data and information."

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. No identifying information was requested or recorded. The study was conducted solely for academic purposes, in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles.

Internal staffing schedules were available for review but were not analysed statistically. Instead, patterns and challenges were noted qualitatively based on observations and feedback to help interpret satisfaction results.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were cleaned, organised and analysed utilising Microsoft Excel and JASP statistical software. JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program) is a free and open-source statistical software program supported by the University of Amsterdam. The software emphasizes intuitive functionality for efficient user interface, making it accessible to those who are familiar with programmes such as SPSS. The user-friendly interface and extensive graphical features serve to make the programme popular in both educational and research settings. JASP offers both classical and Bayesian analysis procedures and produces APA-style output, which makes it easy to be published in many areas of research (McBride & Garcés-Manzanera, 2024). These programs were selected for their ease of use, reliability, and capacity to support descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and visual data exploration. Microsoft Excel was primarily used for cleaning data and conducting frequency analysis, while JASP was employed for generating descriptive statistics and boxplot visualisations.

Three main methods were applied: descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and boxplot visualisations. Each method afforded a multi-dimensional understanding of the relationship between strategic planning and performance. Descriptive statistics and boxplots helped to address O₁ by providing an initial understanding of possible patterns and relationships.

The frequency analysis contributed to O₂ by identifying common problems and proposed solutions identified by staff. The findings from the frequency responses, especially in regards to recommended improvements, were further reflected in the discussion and recommendations sections, which is consistent with O₃.

Descriptive statistics were applied to quantify key indicators from the 20 events, such as satisfaction scores, percentage of return business, budgetary allocation, number of planning tasks, and preparation durations. These statistical measures give a general overview of reporting trends of operational performance across the selected group of events. As a preliminary step in the analysis process, descriptive statistics were employed to provide a statistic summary of the data and clear, condensed presentation of key characteristics. Kaur, Stoltzfus and Yellapu (2018) state that descriptive statistics condense raw data into meaningful summaries, including measures of central tendency and variability, and prepare to move on to statistical analysis.

Boxplots were selected as the primary visual method for exploring the relationship between event planning variables (such as preparation time, task quantity, and budget percentage) and guest satisfaction scores. This method was chosen because it allows clear visualisation of data distribution across categorical groupings. A boxplot presents the median, interquartile range (IQR), and potential outliers, making it particularly useful for identifying patterns in central tendency, variability, and anomalies. According to Mazarei et al. (2024), boxplots are effective non-parametric tools for presenting distributional data in exploratory analyses where assumptions of normality or large sample sizes are not required. This makes them especially suitable for small-sample, real-world studies such as this one. The boxplots were generated using JASP software and applied across each planning variable to support the interpretation of how resource input levels align with satisfaction outcomes.

Frequency analysis was employed on the qualitative survey data to determine the most prevalent challenges reported by hotel staff in the planning and delivery of events. By systematically categorising and counting the frequency of issues like time constraints, communication barriers, and staffing limitations, meaning can be assigned to a trend and probably categorisation of organisational or behavioural issues. Merbitz, Merbitz and Pennypacker (2015) explain, in statistical usage, frequency refers to the number of times a specific value or behaviour occurs within a dataset, making it a valuable tool for identifying patterns in behavioural or organisational responses and informing data-driven decision-making.

2.4. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of all large-scale hotel events held at Hotel Seaside Los Jameos in 2024. A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify twenty (20) events with complete records on planning and outcome variables. This non-probability sampling method allowed the study to select the most informative cases aligned with the research aims. Inclusion criteria included selecting the largest events of the year with documented planning timelines, budget allocations, guest satisfaction feedback, and attendance data. Events lacking any of these components were excluded.

Each event was anonymised and given an identifier (Event 1 to Event 20) to maintain confidentiality while enabling comparison. Although purposive sampling limits generalisability, it allows for a focused and contextually rich analysis. The approach provided meaningful insights into the hotel's planning and operational processes.

The dataset included information related to over 17,000 guests and variables such as satisfaction scores, percentage of returning guests, total attendance, preparation duration, number of tasks, and budget share. These indicators formed the basis for evaluating how strategic planning impacts guest experience outcomes.

A structured questionnaire was also distributed to hotel staff involved in event planning and execution. Participants were from guest relations and management departments. The survey, conducted via Google Forms, received seven valid responses. Although the sample size was limited, all respondents were directly engaged in event coordination or delivery, which enhanced the relevance of their input. Roles were not disclosed to preserve confidentiality.

3. Presentation and Analysis of Results

3.1. Analysis of Results of The Hotel Seaside Los Jameos

This research examined twenty events hosted at Hotel Seaside Los Jameos during the year 2024. Quantitative data were collected from hotel records provided primarily by internal documents, including event planning dates, staffing data, budget allocations, attendance data, and guest satisfaction records. Qualitative data, such as planning issues and coordination difficulties outlined by the staff, were also collected through the use of a structured questionnaire and from conversations with employees working the events.

Each event has been anonymised as Event 1 to Event 20, and satisfaction assessment was homogenous through a satisfaction rating of 1 to 5 (1 = "very dissatisfied", 5 = "very satisfied"). Because specific event-level satisfaction ratings were not always recorded, average guest satisfaction data from internal evaluations and third-party review platforms were used as proxy measures to ensure consistency.

A dataset was created, which included key planning and performance information for each event including, budget allocation (as a percentage of total revenue collected on the day of the event), estimated days of preparation, number of attendance, return business percentage of repeat guests, satisfaction results, and number of planning tasks. This dataset was used for descriptive statistics and boxplot visualisations, and was used to explore if there were any relationships between planning inputs and event results.

The complete dataset is presented in Table 2, which provides a summary of the planning variables and performance outcomes for Events 1 to 20.

Table 2. Planning and Outcome Variables for Events 1 to 20.

Event	Budget	Estimated Prep Time (days)	Attendance number	Return Business (%)	Satisfaction Score (1–5)	Tasks
1	30%	4 days	897	45.49%	4.7	12
2	30%	5 days	1,059	32.70%	4.7	13
3	5%	2 days	790	49.37%	4.8	6
4	5%	3 days	712	50.49%	4.8	6
5	70%	7 days	814	43.19%	4.8	14
6	70%	2 days	837	42.00%	4.8	13
7	70%	7 days	1,054	55.45%	4.8	16

Event	Budget	Estimated Prep Time (days)	Attendance number	Return Business (%)	Satisfaction Score (1–5)	Tasks
8	25%	3 days	859	47.05%	4.5	13
9	15%	3 days	951	30.36%	4.2	10
10	15%	2 days	823	41.83%	4.3	9
11	30%	4 days	1,091	30.89%	4.2	12
12	10%	3 days	746	44.91%	4	9
13	10%	3 days	960	29.79%	4	10
14	10%	3 days	885	30.96%	4	10
15	10%	3 days	771	43.32%	4.1	10
16	10%	3 days	796	40.20%	4.2	10
17	10%	3 days	964	30.29%	4.2	11
18	10%	3 days	1,109	31.47%	4.2	12
19	10%	3 days	992	22.18%	4.2	11
20	20%	5 days	888	33.45%	4.3	11
SD	22%	1.4 days	118.3	9%	0.309	2.426

Source: Author's elaboration.

Table 2 contains planning and outcome data for twenty events that took place at Hotel Seaside Los Jameos. Events that achieved the highest satisfaction scores (4.8) – specifically Events 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7– differed in terms of planning input. Events 3 and 4 used what would be considered minimal resources (5% of budget, and very short preparation time), suggesting that smaller events can still perform well under efficient execution. Events 5, 6, and 7 used overall budgets higher than 70%, preparation periods longer than seven days, and significantly larger numbers of planning tasks (from 13 to 16 planning tasks), which contributed to their consistently strong guest satisfaction outcomes.

Events with mid-range satisfaction scores (4.2 to 4.3), such as Events 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, and 20, generally had moderate resources. While some of these events managed large guest volumes – Event 18 reached over 1,100 attendees – they operated with limited budgets (typically 10%) and shorter preparation timelines, which may have placed pressure on service consistency. These events did not underperform, but their satisfaction outcomes suggest a possible connection between resource limitations and guest experience during high-demand periods.

The events with the lowest satisfaction scores (4.0 to 4.1) – Events 12, 13, 14, and 15 – all highlighted consistent patterns: a low budget allocation (10%), a low number of planned preparation periods (3 days in total), and a smaller number of assigned planning tasks. While the attendance numbers were not the lowest, they illustrate the difficulty of meeting guest expectations when resources are constrained.

At the same time, there are some events with large numbers of participants (for example, Event 2 had 1,059 guests and Event 7 had 1,054 guests), which achieved very high satisfaction scores of 4.7 and 4.8. Both of those events also had longer planned preparation time, larger numbers of planning tasks and, in the case of Event 7, a high budget allocation. This suggests that with appropriate preparation and resourcing, even high-attendance events can meet or exceed guest expectations.

Overall, the data suggest that guest satisfaction is generally highest when events are supported by either strong resource allocation or effective, well-organised planning. In cases where both preparation and investment were limited, satisfaction outcomes tended to be comparatively lower.

3.2. Descriptive and Frequency Analysis

Descriptive analysis was undertaken based on the dataset that was compiled previously. This dataset included the important variables related to event planning and performance outcomes: guest attendance, return business rates, satisfaction scores, number of planning tasks assigned, budget assigned, and estimated preparation time (in days). Analysing these variables ultimately provides an understanding of where the resources were allocated across events and how they may relate to guest outcomes. The descriptive results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of 20 Events.

	Attendan ce	Return Business (%)	Satisfaction Score (1–5)	Task s	Budget %	Estimated Prep. (days)
Valid	20	20	20	20	20	20
Median	886.5	41%	4.25	11	13%	3
Mean	899.9	39%	4.39	10.9	23%	3.55
Std. Deviation	118.297	9%	0.309	2.42 6	22%	1.432
Minimum	712	22%	4	6	5%	2
Maximum	1109	55%	4.8	16	70%	7

Source: Author's elaboration.

The data showcase how attendance, across events varied from 712 to 1,109 guests with an average of 899.9 guests per event. The return business rates ranged from 22% to 55% and averaged about 39% (SD = 9%), indicating differences in customer loyalty from different events. Guest satisfaction scores

were also relatively high in general, averaging 4.39 out of 5, with only slight variability (SD = 0.31) across events.

Planning inputs varied significantly. Budget allocations ranged from as little as 5% to as high as 70% for events, with a mean of 23%, demonstrating a significant difference in financial investments. Events involved an average of 10.9 assigned tasks, ranging from 6 to 16, highlighting variability in organisational complexity. Preparation times varied between 2 and 7 days, with a mean of 3.55 days (SD = 1.432), reflecting different approaches to pre-event planning.

All of these descriptive findings provide a significant overview of how hotel resources were distributed across different events. While the relationship between planning efforts and event outcomes will be explored further in the discussion, the descriptive trends already suggest that variations in preparation time, budget, and task management could have influenced guest satisfaction and return rates.

To complement the descriptive statistics, boxplots were generated using JASP software to explore the distribution of guest satisfaction scores across different levels of key planning variables: preparation time, budget allocation, and number of assigned tasks (Figures 1–3). These visualizations serve as descriptive tools to examine how variations in planning inputs may relate to satisfaction outcomes, without implying causality or statistical significance.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between preparation time and satisfaction scores. Events categorized with longer preparation durations (6–7 days) consistently achieved higher satisfaction ratings. Medium preparation periods (4–5 days) show slightly lower median values and greater variability, while short preparation times (2–3 days) were associated with more dispersed and lower satisfaction outcomes.

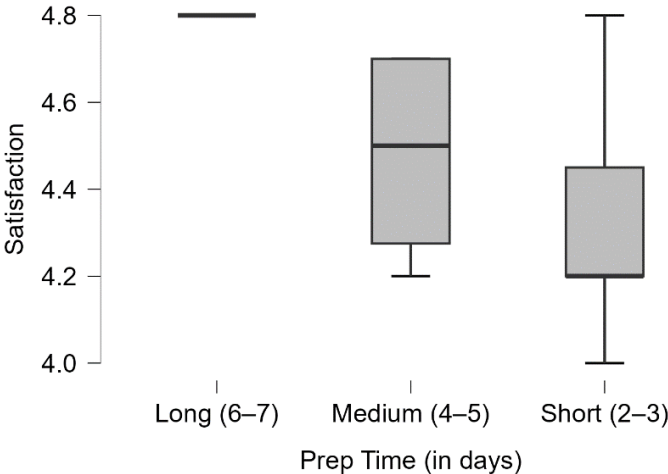


Figure 1. Boxplot of Preparation Time and Satisfaction Scores.

Source: Author's elaboration.

Figure 2 compares the number of planning tasks with satisfaction levels. Events with a high number of assigned tasks (13–16) demonstrate higher and more stable satisfaction scores. In contrast, medium

task assignments (10–12) show the lowest satisfaction medians with notable outliers, and low task counts (6–9) present wider variability, suggesting inconsistent results.

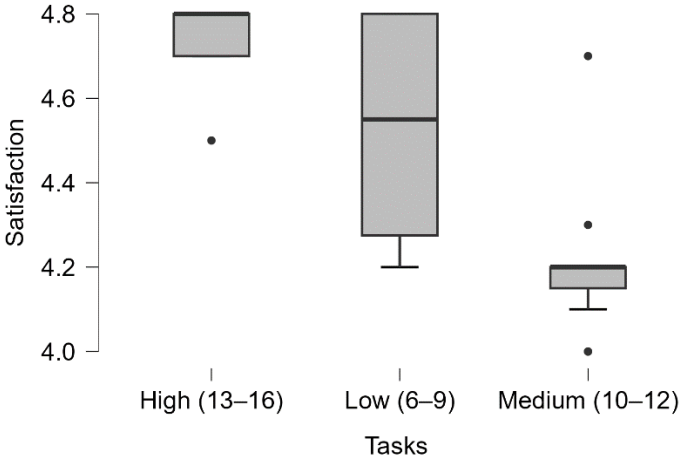


Figure 2. Boxplot of Number of Planning Tasks and Satisfaction Scores.

Source: Author's elaboration.

Figure 3 presents satisfaction scores in relation to budget allocation. Events with high budget allocations (>30%) achieved the highest and most consistent satisfaction ratings. Medium allocations (11–30%) resulted in more variable outcomes, and low-budget events ($\leq 10\%$) were linked to the lowest satisfaction scores and greater dispersion.

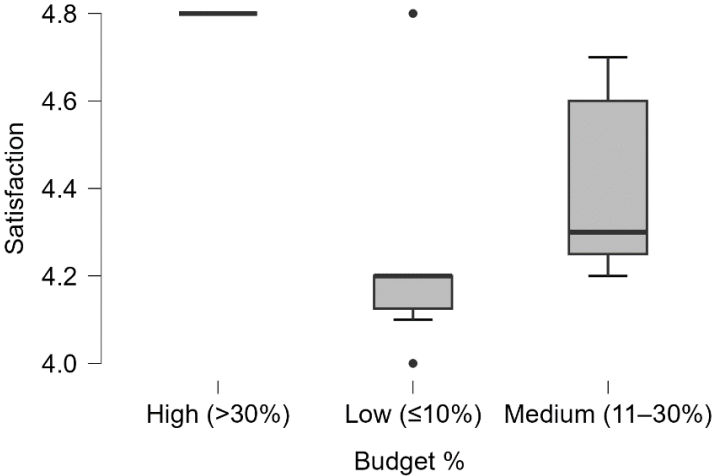


Figure 3. Boxplot of Budget Allocation Percentage and Satisfaction Scores.

Source: Author's elaboration.

These boxplots provide visual insights into how event planning inputs may influence guest experiences. Although no inferential tests were conducted, the patterns observed support further discussion on the

strategic importance of preparation time, task coordination, and budget planning in achieving higher guest satisfaction.

To examine operational challenges in event planning and execution more closely, frequency analysis was conducted on the responses collected from the staff questionnaire (Table 4). Frequency analysis was aimed at identifying the common operational areas affecting hotel staff, and highlighting some of the solutions to enhance strategic event planning.

Table 4. Challenges Reported by Staff.

Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Staff scheduling & communication	6	60%
Time constraints	5	50%
Balancing event duties with regular work	4	40%
Limited staff/resources	4	40%
Lack of communication from planning team	3	30%
Insufficient time to prepare	2	20%
Balancing guest expectations	1	10%

Source: Author's elaboration.

Table 4 shows the frequency of difficulties experienced by the staff. The most reported challenge was staff scheduling and communication issues, reported by 60% of respondents. The next reported challenge included time constraints (50%) and illustrated the additional pressure on staff given limited preparation time. Alongside balancing event duties with hotel work and limited staff/resources, both reported by 40% of respondents, suggests that staff faced difficulty managing event-related responsibilities alongside their regular hotel duties. Other reported challenges to include communication gaps from the planning team (30%), limited time for preparation (20%) and balancing guest expectations (10%).

These results visually presented in Figure 4, where the frequency analysis presents staff scheduling, communication issues, and time pressure as the challenges among respondents.

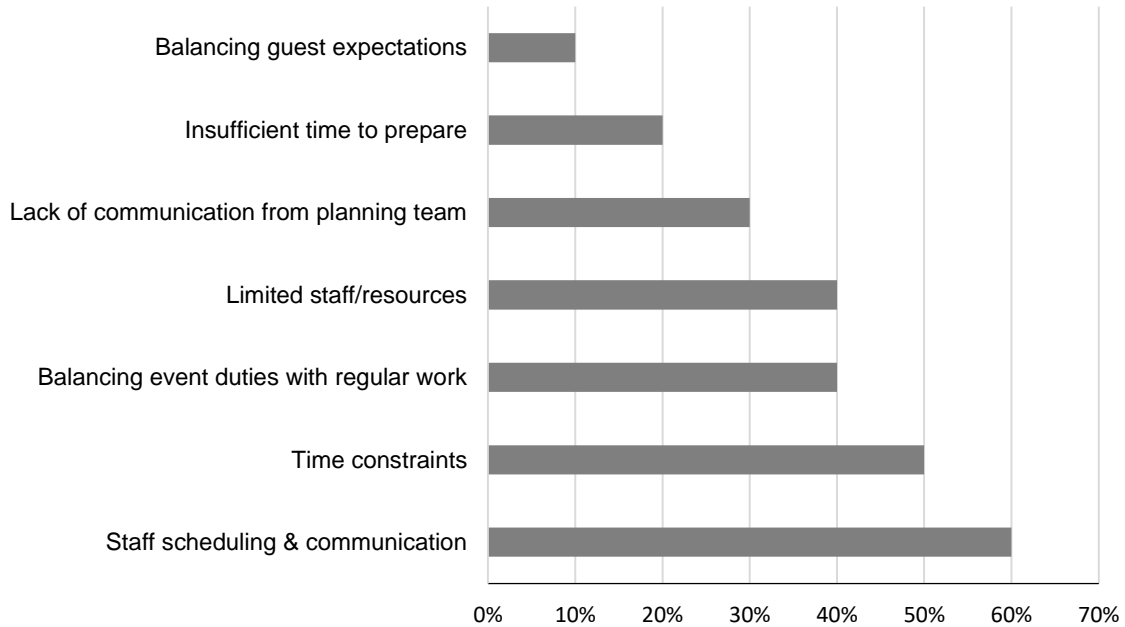


Figure 4. Challenges Reported by Staff.

Source: Author's elaboration.

In addition, responders provided feedback on the specific gaps in the strategic event planning processes (Table 5).

Table 5. Reported Gaps in Strategic Event Planning.

Strategic Planning Gap	Frequency	Percent
Communication issues between departments	4	40%
Lack of pre-event meetings	3	30%
Clarity in task assignment	2	20%
Logistics coordination	1	10%
No major issues noted	1	10%

Source: Author's elaboration.

As illustrated in Table 5, the most frequently identified gap was that of communication between departments (40%) followed by the lack of pre-event meetings (30% of responses). Other concerns included clarity in task responsibilities (20%) and challenges in logistical coordination (10%). In fact, interestingly, a small proportion of respondents (10%) reported no major challenges in the planning process.

Figure 5 shows the findings, where communication issues proved to be the most common structural barrier to effective and strategic planning.

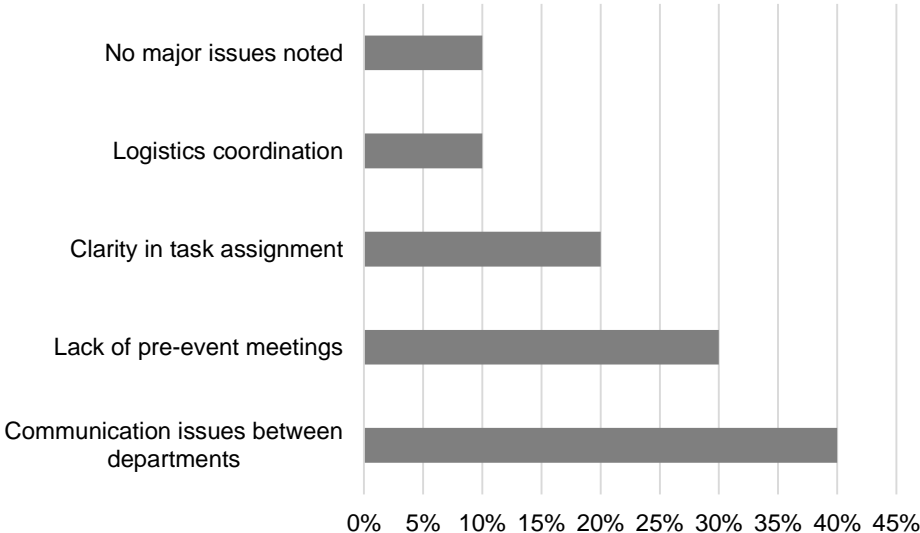


Figure 5. Reported Gaps in Strategic Event Planning.

Source: Author's elaboration.

Besides identifying challenges, staff were asked to make suggestions for improvements. Table 6 shows the most common suggestions made.

Table 6. Frequency of Proposed Improvements by Staff.

Proposed Improvement	Frequency	Percent
Enhanced training/guidelines	6	60.0%
Improved communication/teamwork	5	50.0%
Clearer task assignments	4	40.0%
Gathering guest input	2	20.0%

Source: Author's elaboration.

The most common recommendation, cited by 60% of respondents, was the need for enhanced training and clearer operational guidelines. Responders next suggestion was to improve communication and teamwork (50%) and clearer task assignments (40%). Some working staff (20%) also suggested that gathering more guest feedback can better align event execution with guest expectations.

Figure 6 showcase these suggestions, which were identified enhanced training, communication and, task assignment clarity.

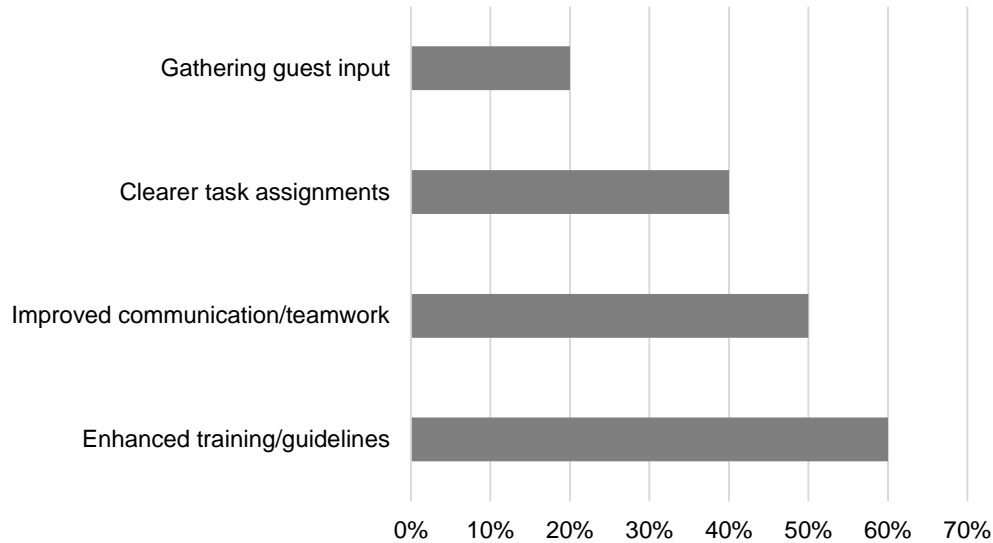


Figure 6. Proposed Solutions by Staff.

Source: Author's elaboration.

Overall, the frequency analysis revealed that issues related to time management, staff resource allocation, and communication are challenges during hotel events. Suggested improvements suggest that staff recognize the need for more formalised strategic structures, improved collaboration, and clarification of operational roles to increase the success of future events.

3.3. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of strategic planning on the effectiveness of hotel event management. The study had three specific objectives: O₁ to investigate the strategic planning importance; O₂ to assess challenges and solutions faced by hotel event planners; and O₃ to propose best practices for future event planning. The findings from the descriptive statistics, boxplot visualisations, frequency analysis, and internal operational review suggest how strategic-planning inputs may relate to event outcomes.

The objective of investigating the importance of strategic planning was supported by the collected data. The descriptive analysis and boxplot visualisations indicated, that events with a longer preparation time (between 5–7 days lead), more budget allocations (up to 70% of revenue on event day), and more planning time tasks (12–16) tended to coincide with guest satisfaction scores. In contrast, events with limited preparation time and lower budget allowances showed lower scores for guest satisfaction. These trends highlight that strategic preparation both in time and financial resources is crucial for delivering successful guest experiences and maintaining service quality. These results support Thomas and Stephens (2022) theoretical approach that continuous evaluation and coordination of budget and time are central to successful event planning. It additionally reflects the findings of Beridze et al. (2023), who

emphasise the direct relationship between budget allocation, time management and guest satisfaction in the hospitality sector.

The second objective, to assess the challenges and solutions faced by hotel event planners, was addressed through the frequency analysis of staff survey responses. Staff identified several recurring operational challenges, including time constraints, staffing and scheduling difficulties, communication breakdowns between departments, and challenges balancing event-related duties with regular hotel operations. Although the survey responses did not directly link these issues to specific events, the general trends suggest that operational pressures may have influenced event outcomes. Staff also proposed several improvements, such as enhanced operational training, improved communication, and clearer task assignments. These findings indicate that while strategic planning at the resource and scheduling level is vital, its effectiveness depends equally on strong operational execution and internal coordination. These outcomes are aligned with Ugwu (2021), who stated that gaps in strategic execution often occur due to insufficient support from middle managers, and Lai et al. (2023), who identified departmental misalignment and coordination failures as common barriers to successful implementation of events in hotels.

The third objective, to propose best practices for strategic event planning, has been developed based on patterns in the quantitative event data and insights gained through the qualitative staff feedback. Best practices are provided in the Recommendations chapter; however, the results indicate a clear need to strengthen preparation timelines, budget allocations, task management, and communication strategies to improve event success. Recommendations from a staff perspective also highlighted the importance of formalised structures for operational training and for pre-event coordination meetings to limit service interruption. These recommendations are in line with Das (2024), who highlights that staff training and interdepartmental collaboration are the most important factors in ensuring service delivery continuity, and Seočanac (2023), who suggests that innovation and sustainability practices should be incorporated into the hotel event planning process. By incorporating these practices, hotels can enhance event outcomes while meeting stakeholder expectations for responsible operations.

In summary, the analysis supports the hypothesis that strategic planning plays a central role in hotel event management. In a competitive hospitality industry, hotels need to improve both the strategic and operational elements of planning for events to deliver events positive reputation. Building on the results presented in this chapter, the subsequent chapter will explore some recommendations and best practice suggestions for improving the strategic management of events.

3.4. Recommendations

Based on the empirical data collected, descriptive analysis, boxplot visualisations, staff feedback and relevant academic literature, several targeted recommendations are proposed to strengthen future event planning practices in the hotel. The recommendations are made to improve event service quality, guest satisfaction, and event coordination for the hotel during an event.

The first recommendation is to increase the length of the time management allocated for event preparation. The highest levels of guest satisfaction were achieved based on the events that had the longest planning time, which was between five and seven days. Sufficient time allows for better coordination between departments, clearer roles, and a focus on service delivery. This recommendation aligns with findings by Darko et al. (2018), who emphasise that effective lead time management significantly contributes to customer satisfaction, as shorter or poorly managed lead times can negatively impact customer experiences and overall satisfaction.

According to the analysis, events with higher budgets (up to 70%) showed tended to have higher guest satisfaction rates. In order to maintain this standard, the second recommendation is that the hotel would need to establish a flexible budgeting system that is appropriate to the complexity and scale of the event. Beridze, Beridze, and Tsetskhladze (2023) emphasize the importance of sufficient budgeting in the hospitality industry to better facilitate teamwork that results in a better guest experience.

In addition, the frequency analysis revealed that communication deficiencies are a recurring problem at events, often disrupting coordination between departments and affecting the efficiency of event planners. Third recommendation is: to address this problem, mandatory coordination meetings should be held prior to the event so that all relevant departments (e.g. operations, guest relations, food and beverage) are aligned on responsibilities and timelines. According to Ugwu and Hkay (2021), improving internal communication is key to a successful event and helps to prevent service inconsistencies.

A fourth opportunity for improvement is to improve staff training and define operational responsibilities during events. Responses to the staff survey indicated that staff often lack confidence or a clear understanding of their roles during high-stress events. Targeted training sessions, such as scenario workshops and task-specific briefings, can increase confidence and improve teamwork between departments. Arulsamy et al. (2023) supported training and development, indicating a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction, motivation, confidence, and organisations performance.

Fifth, it is recommended that predictive analytics be incorporated into the event planning process. Although predictive analytics was not formally applied in this thesis, post-event data such as the number of returning guests and satisfaction trends are valuable indicators for future forecasting. The application of predictive analytics allows event planners to anticipate guest behaviour, optimise attendance and allocate resources more efficiently. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of Awad (2023), who developed and tested machine learning models to predict event attendance and create personalised recommendations for guests. The study found that integrating predictive systems into event management platforms can significantly improve scheduling accuracy and overall guest satisfaction by aligning event strategy with predicted expectations.

In conclusion, enhancing the strategic planning process of Hotel Seaside Los Jameos requires a multifaceted approach. Extending preparation timelines, aligning budgets with event scale, detailed communication, investment in staff training, and adopting predictive analytics tools can significantly

improve the consistency and quality of event outcomes. These proposals are grounded in real-world insights from staff and supported by relevant scientific literature that highlights practices shown to enhance performance, outcomes and satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how strategic planning affects hotel event management and had three specific objectives: assessing the importance of planning factors, identifying operational challenges, and suggesting best practices to improve event outcomes. The results of the analysis of 20 events held at the Seaside Los Jameos Hotel in 2024 indicate that event planning variables, such as preparation time, budget planning, and planning task allocation, significantly affect guest satisfaction.

Descriptive results suggested that events with longer preparation time (five to seven days on average), higher budgets (up to 70%) and a more specific event plan (12–16 planning tasks) tended to have higher guest satisfaction scores. Boxplots were used to examine the distribution and range of these planning variables, helping to identify patterns and variability across events. These results are consistent with the idea that strategic planning contributes to successful events, not only from a logistical perspective, but also in terms of improving the overall guest experience.

In addition to the statistical analyses, employee feedback identified common recurring operational problems that often disrupted the effectiveness of planning. These factors included time shortages, staff limitations, communication gaps, and unclear assignment of responsibilities. While these problems varied in severity, they consistently indicated the need for better coordination and support systems during the planning and execution phases of activities.

From the findings, several practical recommendations were made. These include increased preparation time, fixed budgets based on the complexity of the event, more formal communication methods (a pre-event meetings), and increased staff training. Dynamic predictive analysis was not specifically tested as part of this research, the patterns indicate that historical data can be used to better predict events and allocate resources.

In summary, we can conclude that strategic planning is an important factor in improving the effectiveness of hotel event management when strong communication and accurate operational work are done in combination with each other. It does not only contribute to guest satisfaction, but also improves efficiency, team co-ordination and service quality in the long term. While this study has focused on one hotel context, it provides a foundation for broader research. Future research can include comparisons between different types of hotels or regions, directly incorporating guest feedback, and exploring the potential of digital planning tools and predictive analytics to further improve planning outcomes.

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Appendix A

Strategic Planning in Hotel Event Management – Research Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a master's thesis investigating "The role of strategic planning in hotel event management". The purpose of the study is to explore the involvement of hotel staff in event planning, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they find most effective. Your responses will contribute to a better understanding of how planning processes influence event outcomes. Participation is voluntary and anonymous, and no personal data will be collected. Thank you for your valuable input.

1. What is your role in the event process?

Check all that apply.

- Executive Management
- Event Coordinator
- Guest Relations

2. How frequently are you involved in planning or supporting hotel events?

Check all that apply.

- Always
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely

3. What is your primary level of involvement in hotel events? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Full preparation and participation throughout the event
- Limited support in specific areas (e.g., setup, guest assistance)
- Minimal involvement

4. How do you prioritize strategic planning for events?

Mark only one oval.

- High priority
- Moderate priority
- Low priority

5. Which phases of strategic planning do you focus on most? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Pre-event planning (budgets, timelines, logistics)
- Resource allocation (staff, venue setup)
- Marketing and Guest relation
- On-the-day execution and coordination
- Post-event evaluation

6. How important do you think guest feedback in shaping event strategy?

Mark only one oval.

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

7. What are the most important factors considered when planning events? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Improved seating arrangements (e.g., comfort, accessibility)
- Entertainment options suitable for all ages
- Food and beverage selection
- Venue layout and comfort
- Timing and scheduling

8. How do you collaborate with the primary event planners during the event process?

Mark only one oval.

- Regular meetings or briefings
- Direct instructions on specific tasks
- On-the-day coordination only
- Minimal collaboration

9. What tools or techniques do you use to align team efforts for event success?

Mark only one oval.

- Meetings and regular updates
- Project management software
- Spreadsheets for tracking progress
- Manual checklists

10. What challenges do you frequently face when planning events for guests? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Budget limitations
- Time constraints
- Balancing diverse guest expectations (e.g., older adults vs. children)
- Accessibility concerns (e.g., venue design, transportation)
- Staff scheduling and communication

11. What challenges do you face in your role during event preparation or execution? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Lack of clear communication from the planning team
- Insufficient time to prepare
- Limited resources or staff
- Balancing regular duties with event responsibilities

12. What improvements could help optimize your involvement in events? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Improved communication and teamwork
- Reallocating resources and budgets
- Gathering pre-event guest input
- Enhanced training or guidelines
- Clearer task assignments

13. **Which solutions have been most effective in improving event outcomes?**

14. **Have you faced any unexpected issues during events? If so, what were they and how were they resolved?**

15. How do you measure the success of events? (Select all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- Customer satisfaction feedback
- Attendance and participation rates
- Repeat bookings/return business
- Positive guest comments on-site
- Staying within the allocated budget

16. Do you track attendance based on demographics such as age, family size, or nationality?

Check all that apply.

- Yes, regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No

17. What trends have you observed in guest attendance and satisfaction over time (from December 2023 until now)?

Mark only one oval.

- Attendance has increased
- Attendance has decreased
- Attendance has remained stable

18. Which elements of the event do you think guests appreciate the most? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Accessibility and comfort
- Entertainment programs
- Food and beverage options
- Staff assistance and support
- Venue design and atmosphere

19. Which aspects of the events typically receive the most complaints or require improvement? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Food and beverage quality
- Accessibility issues
- Entertainment options
- Staff availability and communication
- Venue logistics (e.g., overcrowding, layout)
- Did not receive any complaints

20. What improvements would you recommend to enhance the strategic planning process for events? (you can choose more than one)

Check all that apply.

- Increased pre-event communication with guests
- Better collaboration between departments
- Upgraded tools for planning and tracking tasks
- Larger budget allocations for targeted events
- Other: _____

21. How often do you conduct post-event evaluations to identify areas of improvement?

Mark only one oval.

- After every event
- Quarterly
- Annually
- Rarely
- I do not do this

22. **Do you feel there is a gap in current strategic planning processes for hotel events? If yes, what improvements would you suggest?**
