A Study to Investigate how Corporate Events Influence Social Culture Within Organisations: A Case Study Approach

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“A study to investigate how corporate events influence social culture within organisations: A case study approach.”

I declare that this Dissertation has not already been written or submitted by previous students with regards to any degree at an undergraduate level of study. The work included in this Dissertation is a result of my own independent research conducted by myself, except where otherwise stated.

Signed………………………………..

Lily West
ABSTRACT

Corporate events have grown significantly in recent years and are used by many companies to “showcase” themselves to their business communities, potential customers, and competitors. It is evident however, that corporate events also influence and project the social culture that exists within those organisations. The author has a background in the events industry and also has family members who have worked for large image-focused corporate companies. As a result she was keen to understand and investigate the various ways in which a corporate event influences social culture, and whether the money spent on corporate events has a positive impact on the social culture of the host organisation. In order to undertake this research she decided to apply a case study approach.

The author applied secondary research from books, journals and online articles with a specific focus on corporate events and social culture. In addition, the author conducted primary research with representatives from the organisation that was used as the case study. The author considered this to significantly benefit the study as the data allowed her to identify emerging key themes. The primary data gathered included both quantitative and qualitative data using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The use of different methods assisted the process of triangulation to produce valid and reliable data.

The analysis of the data enabled the author to offer three recommendations that can assist organisations to use corporate events more effectively to positively influence social culture. The findings from this study conclude that organisations should allocate appropriate funds with consideration to the required outcomes, which technology should be used effectively to maximise the positive impacts created by staging corporate events, and that corporate events should entertain the targeted guests and create a memorable experience. By applying these findings the author is confident that corporate events can have a positive and lasting impact on the social culture surrounding an organisation.

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Chapter 1:
Introduction
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Chapter Overview:
This first chapter aims to provide the reader with an insight into the structure of the project. The author will discuss the significance of researching the chosen topic by, pinpointing the positive impacts successful corporate events contribute to an organisation’s social culture. The project will adopt a case study approach, in order to fully support all findings and offer appropriate recommendations. The project aims and objectives will conclude the introduction.

1.2. Background to Research:
It is useful to start the research project by providing formal definitions of what an event is and how they link to culture.

‘Today, events are central to our culture as perhaps never before. With every event developing at a fast pace, they now occupy much of our time and enrich our lives. Events can be categorised by the size, form and content. Corporate events fall in the Business Events category.’

(Bowdin et al. 2006)

Bladen, C. (2012:301), provides another more direct quotation concerning the purpose of the events.

‘They are produced by and for businesses, with a primary purposes of supporting business growth.’

(Bladen. 2012)

Despite the consistent purpose, the effectiveness of corporate events differs. Some organisations execute effective events that portray the corporate culture effectually, whilst others fail to achieve the primary purpose and discourage company goals being met.

One example of an organisation that is renowned for executing successful corporate events, is ‘Twitter.’ This is a social networking site that aims to foster communication on a global scale. According to Twitter, 2016,

‘It was first launched in 2006 and has been hugely successful with now over 300 million monthly users and the organisation currently employs 3,860 employees around the world.’
Significantly all employees of ‘Twitter’ commend their corporate events for supporting the company’s culture successfully.

Patel (2015) believes good company culture is now expected in all organisations along with other traditional benefits. When researching organisations, Patel discovered various corporate events hosted by the ‘Twitter,’ ranging from rooftop meeting to free luxury meals in the San Francisco headquarters. Despite the contrast, employees praise ‘Twitter’ for always providing,

‘Friendly, team-oriented environment, where each individual is motivated by the company’s goal.’

(Patel. 2015)

‘Twitter’ provides clear examples of corporate events successfully influencing social culture, as each event provides employees with a chance to work together and boost staff morale.

Unlike ‘Twitter’ some organisations fail to execute successful corporate events. Linkner (2015), a professional speaker on innovation and leadership attends 85 corporate events a year. Linkner attends events that excel every expectation, but also attends poor events that have a negative impact on participants. Linkner highlights how an organisation will host a corporate event in hope to

‘Energise the sales force, or entertain key partners, or achieve higher performance.’

(Linkner. 2015)

But after attending several, he notices not every corporate event achieves this goal. It is advised to acquire a professional meeting planner when executing an important event however, not every organisation follows the recommendations and end up planning the event themselves. Despite the lack of planning, some organisations still host effective events however, Linkner found many did not, as

‘The corners are cut, the nickels are saved, but the impact is diminished and the entire message is lost.’

(Linker. 2015)
Linkner’s recurring experiences of corporate events failing to deliver the message effectively due to the lack of attention to detail, raises an issue the author is interested to explore further: *Are vast amounts of time and money required in order to execute successful corporate events that achieve the end goal and positively influence social culture?*

1.3. **The Research Problem:**

1.3.1. **Corporate Events:**

*Thomas* (2012) explains,

‘A corporate event can be defined as a gathering that is sponsored by a business for its employees, business partners, clients and/or prospective clients.’

*(Thomas, 2012)*

The fast pace of developments have encouraged the diversity within the sector, making corporate events a new concept. For instance an organisation may host a small event in a conference room with new employees, with the purpose to introduce the business strategies and train them to required standards. Whereas another organisation may host an extravagant event with entertainment acts, in order to launch a new product. Despite the developments causing contrasts between each event, *Thomas* focuses on how corporate events will always share the same goal,

‘To create an atmosphere of education that allows the short and long term goals of the company to be realized seamlessly and with exactitude.’

*(Thomas, 2012)*

1.3.2. **HMV Case Study:**

*HMV* is a British entertainment retailing company with over 120 stores around the UK. It is a large organisation that significantly expanded up to 2013, causing its corporate events to grow (*HMV, 2016*). In the early stages when the first store opened on Oxford Street, London in 1921, the organisation hosted small corporate events on a low budget. However, as the business expanded, the corporate events progressed to being hosted in popular venues such as, Hammersmith Apollo with lavish products and world famous entertainment acts.

*HMV* will be used as a case study in order to support the project. Primary data will be collected from representatives from *HMV*, to allow the project to benefit others.
1.3.3. Social Culture:
With the success of HMV corporate events, the author is able to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful events, by highlighting the influence they have on social culture. This enables the author to pinpoint the issue other organisations experience when hosting a poor corporate event.

Therefore, this project will ensure appropriate recommendations are offered to other organisations, which will assist their corporate events to positively influence the social culture.

1.4. Primary Research:
The author aims to solve the research problem by undertaking primary research with representatives from HMV. Methods such as, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will be used to provide quantitative and qualitative data. Both sets of data will be analysed using content analysis, which will allow the author to pinpoint emerging key themes.

As a student at Cardiff Metropolitan University, there are constraints to this project. Time is the main constraint, as the author must conduct primary research within a six-week period and continue to complete the project within a six-month period.

1.5. Research Aims:
To investigate how corporate events influence social culture within organisations using HMV as a case study.

1.6. Research Objectives:

1. To critically review the current literature relating to corporate events and social culture within organisations.

2. To undertake primary research data collection with representatives from HMV to assess the impact of corporate events on social culture within that organisation.

3. To review and analyse the primary data, presenting the results using a variety of formats.

4. To consolidate the research findings by identifying and explaining how corporate
events influence social culture based on the HMV case study.

5. To offer recommendations that will benefit other organisations to appreciate how corporate events can positively influence social culture.

1.7. **Overview of The Research Project:**
The research project will be divided into six chapters. First, the *Introduction* will set the scene, providing the reader with a brief insight to the topic. The *Literature Review* (chapter 2) will follow, where the author will review and analyse previous works relevant to the topic. The third chapter labelled *Methodology* will explain the chosen research methods used to collect the primary data in order to support the project. The *Discussion, Analysis and Interpretation of the Data* will create chapter 4, where the primary data will be presented in various formats and identify emerging key themes. Chapter 5 labelled *Discussion and Analysis of Results* will analyse the key themes in greater detail, providing the reader with a deeper insight to the project. Lastly, chapter 6 will conclude the project with the *Conclusions and Recommendations*. The author will summarise the project and present a list of recommendations to other organisations.

1.8 **Chapter Review:**
This first chapter has established the author’s interest in the chosen topic, as the developments have encouraged a drastic transition making corporate events a current concept. Furthermore, the author believes this chapter expresses the importance of researching the topic, as it will allow organisations to benefit from the recommendations.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Chapter Overview:
This chapter will offer the reader a ‘comprehensive overview on a range of current and relevant literature,’ in order to gain a deeper understanding to the project. (Owlcation. 2015). The Literature Review will be divided into 6 sections. Firstly, by exploring the developments of events, which will continue with the specific analysis of corporate events. The history of corporate events will follow, along with the purpose of hosting corporate events by highlighting the positive impacts one can contribute to a social culture. The final section will conclude the Literature Review, by researching the future of corporate events.

2.2. Overview of Events:
Events have a range of definitions due to the large scope they have evolved into, but Bladen (2012) provides a simple definition that briefly explains how the characteristics make them distinct from common organisational activities:

“Events are temporary and purposive gatherings of people.”

(Bladen. 2012)

In addition, Bladen (2012) notes how events are a display of rituals and each event is a unique occurrence. Despite the distinctive features, events can differ depending on whether they are planned or spontaneous. A planned event will have a “finite beginning and ending”, whereas a spontaneous event will not follow a planned programme. Bladen (2012) uses

‘The death of Princess Diana in 1997 as an example to explain the differences between a managed and spontaneous event, as this sudden occurrence led to two different types of events.’

(Bladen. 2012)

One event was a ‘managed funeral ceremony’ held for the Royal Family to grieve in privacy. Due to the structure of the ceremony, this event would be labelled a planned event. The second, would be classified as a spontaneous event as it consisted of,

‘Millions of people publicly displaying their grief through a variety of gatherings such as, the building of makeshift shrine and walking Princess Diana’s favourite walk.’

(Bladen. 2012)
The example Bladen (2012) provides, demonstrates how events can differ depending on the circumstances. With the rapid development of events, these differences are beginning to expand.

With the celebration of religious holy days to personal events commemorating an anniversary.

‘Events have always played an important role in human society.’

(Bladen. 2012)

The role events play is becoming more significant as the developments proceed.

‘Historically, the organisation of small local events was relatively uncomplicated and needed no extensive managerial expertise.’

(Shone and Parry. 2013)

Shone and Parry (2013) relate this to weddings, as they were originally simple to organise, with only the help from both families of the engaged couple. Nowadays, weddings are perceived to be a challenging, lengthy process with ‘couples typically spending 17 months to prepare for their wedding’ (Fairchild Bridal Group. 2005:129).

As the developments have made the concept of events significant broad, Tum (2006) divides events into four categories including, leisure, cultural, organisational and personal events, which is presented in figure 1. Therefore, the diagram below provides an easy method to distinguish corporate event within organisation events.

Figure 1: Categorisation of events
2.3. The History of Corporate Events:

A definition of corporate events will be provided by Thomas (2012) to introduce this section.

‘They are a gathering that is sponsored by a business for its employees, business partners, clients and/or prospective clients.’

(Thomas. 2012)

Halsey (2010) highlights how a corporate event can be easily distinguished as the

‘Audiences primarily consist of internal employees, who are required to attend.’

(Halsey. 2010)

However, Halsey (2010) highlights the importance of understanding the word ‘corporate.’ He believes ‘corporate’ encourages individuals to believe the ‘craft is only limited to corporate meetings’ however, the concept of corporate events can stretch out to,

‘Association gatherings, large non-profit meetings, speaking engagements and training seminars.’

(Halsey. 2010)

With the different forms of corporate events, it is clear they have developed. But to understand the development process, Halsey (2010) investigates why and how corporate events have developed so significantly.

During the twentieth century when the Great Depression came to an end, the American economy was the strongest in the world. This led to a ‘shift in the corporate thinking’, which affected all employees, as they were

‘No longer viewed as merely cogs in the corporate wheel, but were perceived as valuable assets of the corporate team.’

(Halsey. 2010)

This transition encouraged corporate events being introduced to all organisations, in order to ‘nurture and motivate’ the employees, who were now considered significantly important to organisations.

In addition to the shift in thinking, ‘technology and media of the time were evolving’, which led to the first development of corporate events. Before, they existed within the industry in the “most basic form.” But the transition in thinking and technology encouraged corporate events to captivate its audiences with a variety of techniques.
“Simple signs were hung to add décor. Comedians and musicians were hired to entertain audiences between presentations. Speaking platforms grew into large stages, and oversized banners announced the company’s slogan. Year after year, more and more bells and whistles were added.”

(Halsey, 2010)

With the constant developments, Halsey (2010) noticed a simple formula was created, in order to execute successful corporate events. It consisted of the event message being played to the “tune of a Broadway musical” and accompanied by performers creating an exciting show. When investigating corporate events today, many organisations still apply aspects of this formula to their events.

2.4. The Developments of Corporate Events:
As the study is focusing on corporate events and how they influence social culture, the author deems it appropriate to review developments associated with corporate events.

2.4.1. Location and Venue:
As Halsey (2010) discovered, corporate events were first executed in the “most basic form.” They were held in small office rooms that displayed a lack of attention to detail. But the research Halsey (2010) and others have undertaken highlight the development corporate events have experienced.

Firstly, Allen (2009) emphasises “location is everything.” Previously corporate events lacked a memorable ambience because they were commonly held in dull venues. But as the years have passed, the varieties of venues and locations have expanded. Halsey (2010) identifies ‘hotels, convention halls, theatres and stadiums’ now being the common venues for corporate events. Allen (2009) highlights

‘The selection of the site where the event will be held at, is of primary importance.’

(Allen, 2009)

Allen (2009) considers the selection of site significantly important, as the appropriate choice will aid with engaging the audience effectively, resulting with the aim of the event being accomplished. However, whilst O’Toole and Mikolaitis (2002) agree with Allen (2009) and believe a suitable venue
‘Can change the entire atmosphere of the event and play a key role is its success.’

(O’Toole and Mikolaitis. 2002)

They also pinpoint the importance of considering the different constraints various venues possess, that may limit the activities allowed within the venue such as,

‘The physical constraints including the entranceways and capacity of floors along with the history of the venue.’

(O’Toole and Mikolaitis, 2002)

With this in mind, O’Toole and Mikolaitis (2002) emphasise the importance of conducting in-depth research to ensure the location is best suited.

2.4.2. Event Design:
The following section will explore the event design. Previously corporate events were unexciting, but the developments have encouraged the creation of new themes enabling exciting atmospheres.

There are many different outlooks on what event design is and how it affects a corporate event. For instance, Brown (2005),

‘Believes the design of event must maximise the positive and meaningful impact for audiences and/or participants.’

(Brown. 2005)

Whereas Brown and James (2004) believe:

“The design is essential to an event’s success because it leads to improvement of the event on every level.”

(Brown and James. 2004)

The event design is made up of many components, lighting, sound and décor being three. With the evolvement of each component, the concept of event design has encouraged an overall development for corporate events.

Firstly, the lighting for corporate events has developed, due to the technological advancements introducing innovative methods, as new designs now provide creative methods to light a room. Rankin (2007) identifies three methods to light a corporate event.
'A par floodlight is used to light the back of a stage, whereas a striplight will light a wide area in the desired colour by adding coloured gels. A follow spotlight is used to follow individuals on stage.'

(Rankin. 2007)

The new and improved lighting methods significant impact corporate events, as Halsey (2010) believes,

‘Lighting is one of the most important aspects of a successful design.’

(Halsey. 2010)

Halsey (2010) considers the component of lighting plays a significant role in the effectiveness of a corporate event because,

‘Lighting has the ability to direct audience’s view towards what is important and effect emotions, through appropriate colour palettes. A lighting design can assist with the flow of events and amplify audience’s experience.’

(Halsey. 2010)

In addition, the sound system has also developed, which contribute beneficial impacts to corporate events. Shone and Parry (2013) note how,

‘Historically, sound systems was at best, a microphone and a couple of loudspeakers.’

(Shone and Parry. 2013)

But with every development, the needs of audience’s have increased, making the history of sound systems “to be inadequate for current needs.” Corporate events are able to take advantage of the new equipment, in order to improve the overall event experience. Halsey (2010) pinpoints two reasons why an adequate sound system must be incorporated.

‘The first and most obvious reason is to ensure everyone can hear what is happening onstage or on-screen. The second reason is to create atmosphere and enhance the event experience.’

(Halsey. 2010)

A third component of the event design, is the décor. Allen (2009) believes this term “includes all of the furnishings and decorations in the room.” As stated previously by Halsey (2010) in
section 2.4.1, corporate events were executed in the “most basic form,” therefore, implying corporate events failed to incorporate décor. Getz (2007) defines theme,

‘Being a unifying idea or concept which gives meaning to an event.’

(Getz. 2007)

Thereby signalling the importance of décor, as it creates an ambience and communicates the meaning of the corporate event. The development of corporate events have provided additional methods to decorate a venue, as Halsey (2010) highlights how

‘Scenic elements such as, art pieces can be installed, in order to decorate a venue.’

(Halsey. 2010)

With each component explained, Halsey (2010) highlights the importance of producing an event design ‘creatively and efficiently,’ as he considers it to contribute to the end goal and ‘leave attendees with a complete understanding of the client’s message.’

2.5. The Purpose of Corporate Events:
Bladen et al (2011) understands,

“Corporate events are produced by and for businesses, with a primary purpose of supporting business growth.”

(Bowdin et al. 2011)

Thomas (2012) elaborates by distinguishing the various ways corporate events support business growth.

‘Hosting a corporate event enables employees to be rewarded for their hard work. They encourage productivity that promotes togetherness within the office.’

(Thomas. 2012)

In addition, Bladen et al (2011) establish the positive impacts corporate events contribute to organisations. He and others believe the impacts of events can be divided into three categories, as shown in figure 2.
When referring to Tum’s (2006) ‘categorisation of events’ (figure 1), it was clear ‘organisational events’ consist of corporate events. Therefore, the author will proceed by analysing the ‘organisational impacts’ within figure 2. Bladen et al (2011) believes these impacts include,

‘Financial impacts by generating revenue, human resource impacts by motivating employees and marketing impacts by raising product awareness.’

(Bladen et al. 2011)

When examining the three organisational impacts further, Hard (2016) pinpoints the specific corporate event that achieves the impact, to reinforce the purpose of hosting one.

*Hard (2016)* believes a meeting will be held when organisations hope to maximise profits, as employees can grasp a clear understanding of new strategies to support the business. Furthermore, *Hard (2016)* believes an appreciation dinner is the most appropriate event when motivating employees. As employees can be recognised and awarded for their hard work, along with offering employees the opportunity to

‘To build a positive rapport by allowing guests to spend informal time with one another.’

(Hard. 2016)

When a corporate event is executed with the primary purpose of achieving profile awareness, a product launch party is recommended, especially for companies such as, ‘Amazon’ as these ‘events are most common for business to consumer (B2C) companies’ (Hard. 2016).
2.6. Social culture within Organisations:
The author will also examine the literature concerning social culture, in order to support the project. Similarly to corporate events, the concept of culture has become significantly diverse, resulting with a range of definitions. Borowsky (1994) states, ‘Culture has no fixed or broadly agreed meaning.’ However, Schein (2004) offers a definition of culture being,

“A dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being enacted by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership, and a set of rules that constrain behaviour.”

(Schein. 2004)

Furthermore, Schwartz and Davis (1981) offer a second definition.

“Culture is a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by organisation’s members. They produce norms that shape the behaviour of individuals.”

(Schwartz & Davis. 1981)

Both definitions emphasise the impact culture plays on individual’s behaviour. A culture within an organisation is referred as a corporate culture. Cremer (1993) believes corporate culture represents the “unspoken code of communication among members of an organisation.” In addition, O’Reily and Chatman (1996) refer to corporate culture as,

“A set of norms and values that are widely shared throughout organisations.”

(O’Reily & Chatman. 1996)

O’Reily (1996) believes ‘most people care about the people who surround them.’ Therefore, individuals share a common set of expectations with colleagues, implying individuals are under control whenever they are in the work place. Alternatively, with regards to corporate values, Kreps (1990) believes,

‘Corporate values are the reputations a company develops over time.’

(Kreps. 1990)

This highlights the importance of securing a positive culture, due to the impacts one can contribute to an organisation. Sørensen (2002) believes a

‘Strong corporate culture improves a firm’s performance by facilitating internal behavioural consistency.’

(Sørensen. 2002)
Additionally, Kotter & Heskett (1992) also believes a

‘Corporate culture is an important factor when determining the success or failure of firms, as corporate culture impacts a firm’s long-term economic performance.’

(Kotter & Heskett. 1992)

In summary, this section briefly begins to respond to the research question, by exploring the positive impacts a strong culture contributes to organisations.

2.7. The Future of Corporate Events:
When researching the overall concept of events, Yeoman (2015) believes,

‘The growth of events has been significant over the last decade.’

(Yeoman. 2015)

It is clear this growth influenced the development of corporate events, as O’Toole and Mikolaitis (2002) discovered,

‘Corporate events are the fastest-growing sector of the event industry, as well as the sector with the highest yields.’

(O’Toole and Mikolaitis. 2002)

To continue the exploration, Halsey (2010) investigates the future for corporate events. Whilst it is clear the technological advancements have contributed to the development of corporate events, Halsey (2010) believes

‘The rapid evolution of video technology holds potential for the event industry.’

(Halsey. 2010)

Currently corporate events are able to use technology to their advantage, by incorporating special effects that enable an inviting ambience and encourage the audience to feel connected with the event theme. However, Halsey (2010) investigates,

‘Organic Light Emitting Diodes will dominant LED technology, as it has the ability to turn plastic into video display surfaces. There will now be no need for projectors, encouraging the process of presentations to run smoothly.’

(Halsey. 2010)
In addition, *Halsey* believes,

‘*Infrared technology will have a large impact on the future, as body-heat map will allow robotic lighting to follow individuals on stage.*’

*(Halsey. 2010)*

With this, audiences will have a clear view of individuals on stage, helping to improve their event experience. To support *Halsey’s* findings, *Bowdin et al (2011)* believes,

‘*Video presences have significantly impacted the design, marketing and delivery of corporate events.*’

*(Bowdin et al, 2011)*

To summarise, the investigation of the future of corporate events conducted by *Halsey’s* and others, have emphasised the likelihood of the developments continuing to contribute positive impacts to corporate events.

**2.8. Chapter Review:**

This chapter has explored and analysed the current literature surrounding the research question. First, the author reinforced the importance of investigating the topic, by exploring the history and developments of corporate events. The reader then learnt the author’s rationale, with the following section exploring the purpose of hosting a corporate event, by highlighting the positive impacts one contributes to organisations and social culture. The concluding section provides a clear justification for the topic, as it reviews the future for corporate events, highlighting how the concept is currently evolving today. The project will continue with the *Methodology*, which will explain the research framework.
Chapter 3: Methodology
3.1. Chapter Overview:
The following chapter labelled Methodology refers to the ‘method of solving research problems systematically’ (Kothari. 2004:8). The author will identify and explain the primary research methods that were chosen to support the project. The author will provide clear justifications why each method was adopted, along with the significance of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, by establishing the importance of valid and reliable data. The author will conclude this chapter by discussing the process of gaining ethics approval.

The purpose of this chapter is to ensure the reader gains a clear insight to the chosen primary research methods, to assist with the reader’s comprehension in the following chapter, labelled Discussion, Analysis and Interpretation of Data.

3.2. Primary Research Methods:
Prior to undertaking the primary research, the author understood the importance of ensuring both methods offered valid and reliable data, as this will enable her to offer recommendations, ensuring the study benefits others.

3.2.1. Why Primary Research?
Glass (1976:3) identifies primary research as ‘the original analysis of data in a research study.’ This implies primary research gathers brand new data that is yet to be analysed by others. Kothari (2004:95) reinforces the originality, by stating ‘primary research collects afresh data for the first time.’

Therefore, the author understood conducting primary research would benefit the project, as she can interest the reader through the analysis of new data, which identifies original key themes.

3.2.2. Questionnaires:
Firstly, the author gathered primary data through the method of questionnaires. Kothari (2004:100) mentions
‘This method of data collection is popular and has been adopted by private and public organisations.’

(Kothari. 2004)

Therefore, the author felt confident to adopt this method, when gathering data from HMV representatives.

Within the ethics application form (available in appendices, pages 72 – 85) the author proposed to gain 50 questionnaire responses from representatives of HMV. However, the author was unable to succeed and only received 34 responses. Despite the limited number, the author was satisfied and confident with the primary data gathered.

When referring to the ethics application form, the reader can pinpoint the number of questions the author decided to include within the questionnaire. The author considered 15 close-ended questions appropriate, as it enabled the author to gather well-grounded data, without significantly interfering with the participant’s working hours.

Once the author had produced the questionnaire, the final version was emailed to one representative from HMV, Kathy Breslin (Head of Human Resource), whom the author was in contact with prior to this project. After a week, the author received an email containing 34 completed questionnaires. With this, the author was able to begin the analysis of the quantitative data, by utilizing Excel in order to represent each question through a variety of formats.

3.2.3. Why Questionnaires?

When deciding the most appropriate primary research method to adopt, the author discovered several benefits questionnaires contribute to a study. Bowling (2002) and Denscombe (2003) argue

‘Questionnaires are accepted as having certain advantages over other data collection methods.’

Mertler (2002) also suggests,

‘Questionnaires are an efficient and convenient alternative to the more traditional methods of gathering information.’

(Mertler. 2002)

Furthermore, Jones et al (2008) reinforce the benefits of questionnaires, by identifying

‘Its ability to reach large numbers and the variety of ways in which one can be delivered, such as verbal communication or electronically.’

(Jones et al. 2008)

Therefore, questionnaires were considered the most appropriate primary research method to adopt for this research project. The author understood this method would reach a large number of participants, as Kathy Breslin previously offered to distribute the email to available employees. Therefore, this method would reach a large number of participants, whilst being the least time consuming for both the author and participants.

3.2.4. Semi-Structured Interviews:
Semi-structured interviews were the second primary research method the author adopted for this project. As Dunn (2005:79) states,

‘Interviews are verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person.’

(Dunn. 2005)

Interviews can be categorised into structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Dunn (2005:80) identifies semi-structured interviews including,

‘Some degree of predetermined order but still ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant.’

(Dunn. 2005)
Therefore, the author felt confident to adopt this method, due to the flexibility it offers.

Along with the questionnaires, Kathy Breslin offered to distribute two semi-structured interviews to representatives of HMV. Despite the ethics application form stating a few representatives would respond to the interview, the author was satisfied with the primary data gathered by two participants.

Due to the larger scale, the author understood the primary data was predominantly gathered through questionnaires. Therefore, the author ensured the interview questions elaborated from the questionnaire, to ensure the exploration of each key theme was supported by the qualitative data. Therefore, the author included an additional six questions, resulting with the semi-structured interview consisting 21 open-ended questions. Cohen (2008) highlights the importance of including open-ended questions as they,

‘Allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.’

(Cohen. 2008)

In addition, Johnson (2002) reinforces the significance of open-ended questions, as they

‘Give informants power and control over what and how gets discussed in the interview..’

(Johnson. 2002)

This implies the structure may encourage participants to express their opinions in more depth.

Once the semi-structured interview was finalised, the author attached the document in an email to Kathy Breslin. Both the participant information sheet and consent form accompanied this, ensuring the participants understood the study’s aim and were both aware they could withdraw from the research process at any given time.
3.2.5. Why Semi-Structured Interviews?

The exploration concerning the various primary research methods made it apparent how semi-structured interviews would benefit this project. Firstly, Cohen (2008) identifies the ‘reliable and comparable qualitative data’ that is gathered when conducting this method. This will benefit the study, as qualitative data will allow the author to justify each key theme that was previously identified within the quantitative data. In addition, Longhurst (2003) recognises how

‘Semi structured interviews can be used for a range of research, and are reasonably informal in nature and flexible, so they can be carried out in-person or online.’

(Longhurst. 2003)

Therefore, the author considered semi-structured interviews the most suitable primary research method to adopt for this project. The author understands this method will benefit the study, due to the flexibility it offers to both participants and the author, encouraging the process of gathering reliable data to be simple.

3.3. Analysis of Results:

The author decided to adopt primary research methods, that would produce both quantitative and qualitative data, due to the strengths each possess. The author recognised the benefit of quantitative data, due to the numerical format allowing the identification of key themes to be significantly easy. Alternatively, Miles & Huberman (1994:10) recognise how qualitative data can benefit the study,

‘Due to its strong potential for revealing complexity; such data can provide “thick descriptions” that are vivid and nested in real context.’

(Miles & Huberman. 1994)

Therefore, the author believed both quantitative and qualitative data would not only provide a balance, but also support the analysis of each key theme. Furthermore, the author established

‘Researchers are increasingly applying mixed-method techniques to deepen their insights from their studies.’
With this, the author established appropriate measures of data analysis were required. When analysing the qualitative data, the author established content analysis as the most appropriate. As mentioned by Weber (1990:5)

“Content analysis classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data.”

(Weber. 1990)

Therefore, as the interview accumulated large amounts of qualitative data, the author identified the relevant data, to reduce the proportion of data presented in chapter 4. This enabled the author to achieve the goal of content analysis, which Downe-Wamboldt (1992:314) identifies as “providing knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study.”

3.4. Validity, Reliability and Triangulation:

The author deemed the validity and reliability of primary data significantly important. As Merriam (2009:209) mentions,

‘All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner.’

(Merriam. 2009)

To ensure a clear understanding of the discussed terms, Joppe (2000) offers a definition of reliability as,

‘The extent to which results are consistent over time and show an accurate representation of the total population.’

(Joppe. 2000)

Furthermore, Joppe (2000) explains the importance of validity, as it ‘determines how truthful the research results are.’
The author believes both primary research methods gathered valid and reliable data, enabling the study to be replicated and benefit future researchers.

3.4.1. **Triangulation:**
To ensure the primary research methods presented both valid and reliable data, the author adopted the process of triangulation. This refers to the

> “Observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points.”

*(Flick & Kardorff & Steinke. 2004)*

Furthermore, Denzin (1978) understands

> ‘Triangulation can be used as a validations strategy due to the combination of data drawn from different sources, at different times, places and people.’

*(Denzin. 1978)*

Therefore, the author deemed the triangulation process important, as it encourages a deeper understanding to the project by enhancing the validity and reliability of the data, as Long (2007:15) explains,

> ‘The more times we examine something in different ways, the more we increase our chances of understanding what we are studying.’

*(Long. 2007)*

3.5. **Ethics Approval:**
Prior to undertaking the primary research, the author had to gain ethical approval from the University. Therefore, no data was collected until the Ethics Committee had granted approval. This was essential, as it protected the author and University from the foreseeable risks. The approved ethics form can be found in appendices, page 86.

The author considered the process of ethics approval relatively simple, due to the author’s father previously holding the position of the HR Director at HMV. Not only did this limit the potential risks, but it also implied the author was able to gain easy
access into the organisation that was used as the case study. Despite this relation, the author was objective when collecting and analysing the primary data.

Once ethical approval was granted, the research journey could begin. The author adopted a professional approach, as she understood she would be representing the University and wanted to ensure participants felt comfortable during the process. The author acknowledged the importance of being credible during the research process as Patton (1999:1190) states,

‘Credibility is dependent on training, experience, track record, status and presentation of self.’

(Patton. 1999)

Prior to this study, the author had not conducted primary research on a large scale. Therefore, the author believes this research journey has been a positive experience that will benefit her future career within the events industry.

3.6. Chapter Review:
In summary, this chapter has identified and justified the primary research methods adopted for this project. The author explored the process of triangulation that enabled both methods to produce valid and reliable data. Identifying the process and explaining the importance of ethical approval concluded this chapter.

The author deems this chapter important, as it contributes to the reader’s understanding concerning the primary data, which will be presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Discussion, Analysis and Interpretation of Data
DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 Chapter Overview:
This chapter is formed to present and discuss the primary data, which the author will present logically, in order to support the reader’s comprehension. Both sets of data will be appropriately presented either in a graphical or a written format. Once this chapter is summarised, the author will proceed to discuss the findings further in the following chapter.

The author understands the importance of forming this chapter adequately, as the significance is emphasised by two authors. Firstly, Kothari (2004) states,

‘The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions and find the truth that has not yet been discovered.’

(Kothari. 2004)

Similarly, Thody (2006) believes,

‘Answering the research question is the prime purpose for any study and forms the spine in each chapter.’

(Thody. 2006)

4.2. Quantitative Data:
The primary data was predominantly acquired through questionnaires therefore, providing a large proportion of quantitative data. Gillian et al (1998) believes,

“The communication of scientific research requires decisions about how to present quantitative data.”

(Gillian et al. 1998)

Furthermore, Thody (2006) believes,

‘Readers should be able to understand findings just by looking at the figures and tables.’

(Thody. 2006)

With this in mind, the author decided bar graphs and pie charts as the most appropriate format when presenting the data.
'Bar charts are one of the most commonly used types of graph, when presenting ordinal data, because they are simple to create and easy to interpret. Similarly, pie charts are useful for displaying data as they provide good visual representations of data.'

(University of Leicester. 2009)

Therefore, as the primary research gathered ordinal data, which can be referred to as ‘quantities that have a natural ordering’ (Usable Sats.2017), the author believed this format would benefit the study. However, Lindle (2004) highlights the importance of providing a consistent layout by stating,

‘The words you select both inside and outside the graphs are as important in quantitative research, as they are in qualitative research.’

(Lindle. 2004)

Therefore, the author presented each diagram clearly, with the question as the title and both Y and X-axis labelled. The author hopes the presentation will contribute to the reader’s understanding, with regards to the study’s aim.

The questionnaire can be found in appendices, pages 87 – 89.
4.3. Results and Analysis of Quantitative Data:

**Question 1: What is your gender?**

![Figure 3: What is your gender?](image)

The results from question 1 didn’t significantly contribute to the project, but the author considered this question essential, as it eased participants into the questionnaire process.

The first four questions gathered information regarding the participant’s employment history within the organisation.
This question helped establish whether patterns later emerged regarding the employee’s age. It is clear from this diagram, the organisation predominantly held an older population.
Q3. What department within the organisation do you work in?

Figure 5: What department within the organisation do you work in?

This question gathered specific information relating to individual participants. Despite ‘Commercial’ being the most referenced, the author was pleased to accumulate a variety of 16 departments. The author hopes the variety later highlights emerging themes, regarding participants in similar or dissimilar departments.
Q4. How many years have you worked at this organisation?

The following question was included to emphasise the reliability of the primary data therefore; the author was pleased to discover majority of participants have worked at the organisation for 10+ years.
Q5. How many conferences have you attended at this organisation?

This question reinforced the primary data as a reliable source, as every participant had attended at least two conferences. Therefore, participants were able to provide well-grounded information, by comparing their two (or more) conference experiences.
Q6. How would you rate your overall experience of this organisation’s conferences?

The following questions gathered information regarding the participant’s experiences and opinions of the organisation’s conferences.

To enable a simple analysis process, the author divided the ratings into five categories. It is clear ‘positive’ obtained the most votes however, two participants considered their experiences as ‘disappointing.’ The author considered these results satisfactory, as the data provides dissimilar arguments to discuss in the following chapter.
Q7. Prior to attending the conference, how would you rate your understanding of the organisation’s objective?

In order to compare and analyse the primary data, the author asked questions concerning the participant’s opinion of the conferences prior and after attending.

This question accumulated information of the participant’s understanding of the organisation’s objective prior to attending. As this diagram illustrates, 23 participants had a ‘clear’ understanding, with an additional six possessing an ‘extremely clear’ understanding. Despite one participant believing their understanding was ‘extremely unclear,’ the author considers this diagram a positive portrayal of the organisation, as most participants acquired a clear understanding of the objective, which enables the organisation to grow and develop.
Q8. Following the conference, how would you rate your understanding of the organisation’s objective?

In order to compare, question 8 asked participants to rate their understanding of the objective following the conference. Despite one category (‘extremely unclear’) remaining consistent, the author recognised a significant difference. Previously, six participants rated their understanding of the objective ‘extremely clear’ however, this increased to 18 participants following the conference. Therefore, the author believes this comparison to demonstrate the effectiveness of hosting a successful conference.
Q9. How would you rate the impact of the conference upon staff morale within stores and head office?

The author was also interested to discover the impact of the conferences. Therefore, the author asked a series of questions concerning the organisation and how the conferences affected it.

The author was first interested to learn the impact of conferences upon staff morale within stores and head office. Despite ‘improved’ obtaining the most votes (15), the author was shocked to discover nine participants believed the conference had no impact towards the staff morale, along with a further three participants rating the staff morale as ‘slightly worse’ following the conference. Despite this, the author would still recognise the impact of conferences upon staff morale within stores and head office positively, due to most participants expressing a positive opinion.
Q10. How would you rate the impact of the conference upon staff morale within your department?

![Figure 12: How would you rate the impact of the conference upon staff morale within your department?](image)

The author was also interested to discover the impact of conferences upon staff morale within departments. As the diagram illustrates, a total of 18 participants provided positive data regarding the improved staff morale within their department. However, when examining the ‘no change’ category, the author was interested to learn why the conference had less impact on staff morale within departments than stores and head office. Furthermore, the author established the four participants whom believed the staff morale was ‘slightly worse’ following the conference worked within Visual Buying, HR/Finance/Events and Commercial. The author was pleased she could refer to question 3, when analysing the data, as it allowed her to pinpoint emerging themes regarding specific departments.
Q11. How would you rate the impact of the conference upon staff productivity within stores and head office?

The following questions enabled the author to broaden her knowledge further, by enquiring the impact of conferences upon staff productivity in similar areas. However, the author would argue the analysis of question 11 represented no significant results. This is due to the improved and no change category obtaining equal votes (15). However, as the ‘greatly improved’ category consists of three votes, as opposed the ‘slightly worse’ category consisting just one vote, the author believes the impacts are slightly more positive than negative.
Q12. How would you rate the impact of the conference upon staff productivity within your department?

**Figure 14: How would you rate the impact of the conference upon staff productivity within your department?**

To continue the format, the following question enquired the impact of conferences upon staff productivity within departments. The author recognised a decrease in positive responses, as the ‘improved’ category decreased by three participants. As a result the ‘no change’ category increased by three participants. Furthermore, the ‘slightly worse’ category increased, as two participants within Games and HR/Finance/Events believed the staff productivity was ‘slightly worse’ following the conference. Therefore, the author would argue this diagram portrays the organisation’s conferences negatively.
Q13. How would you rate the effectiveness of the conference in communicating details of the new product release for the Christmas period?

The previous questions gathered data relating to the impact of conferences upon staff. However, the author was keen to learn the impact upon the effectiveness of business. Therefore, the author incorporated question 13 in order to fully support the research question.

The author was pleased to discover the positive impact the organisation’s conferences have upon the communication for new products. Despite three participants rating the impact as ‘neither effective nor ineffective,’ it is clear this diagram displays a positive representation of the organisation’s conferences. As this questionnaire was completed during the Christmas period, the author was satisfied to collect such positive valid data.
Q14. How would you rate the organisations’ conference style?

Prior to analysing, the author was intrigued to discover whether participants considered the conferences purposeless, or they lacked a memorable atmosphere, or participants viewed them as a special opportunity to relax, be entertained and enhance their business understanding.

As the organisation is renowned for hosting conferences in popular venues with lavish products and world famous entertainment acts, the author was surprised no participants rated the style as ‘extravagant.’ However, the author was pleased to discover the ‘exciting’ category contained the most votes (14). Not only does this emphasise the exciting elements incorporated in its conferences, but also suggests well-executed conferences can both entertain and educate employees. However, nine participants rated the style as ‘basic,’ which suggests participants are unengaged due to a lack of entertainment, which can have a damaging effect on the achievements of objectives. The remaining seven participants rated the style as ‘other.’ Due to this broad category, the author was pleased one participant provided a justification, by writing “It feels very bespoke to this organisation” (found in appendices, page 139). This suggests the organisation’s conferences are unique and personalised to its employees, which encourages employees to feel integrated and enthusiastic to develop their knowledge.
Q15. Would you advise other organisations to implement similar conference events to improve morale and business understanding?

The author considered the analysis of the quantitative data portrayed the organisation’s conferences positively. Therefore, she was pleased to discover 88% of participants would advise other organisations to implement similar conferences. However, 12% (four participants) would not advise other organisations to implement similar conferences. In order to gain a clear understanding, the participant’s previous responses were analysed. The author discovered the participants were both male and female and aged between 36 – 50+ years old. The female participants had attended 2 – 4 conferences, whilst the male participants had attended 5 – 7. From questions 7 – 13, the author noticed all responses were predominantly positive. However, when participants rated the style of the conferences, the results ranged from ‘basic,’ ‘other’ and ‘original.’ The author understands ‘basic’ and ‘other’ suggests participants believe the conferences could improve. Therefore, the author concludes the four participants believe the conferences have a positive impact upon business, but the style fails to entertain them.
4.4. Qualitative Data:
As mentioned in the Methodology, the author conducted two semi-structured interviews to representatives of HMV. This method gathered qualitative data, which allows the reader to grasp a clear insight to the opinions of participants as it,

‘Includes any information that can be captured that is not numerical in nature.’

(Trochim., M.K., W. 2006)

The author researched the aims of qualitative data analysis, to ensure the following sections support the reader’s comprehension regarding the primary data. The aims are as followed:

• Describe a phenomenon in greater detail.
• Identify the conditions on which such differences are based.
• Develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of empirical material.

(Flick, U. 2014)

Furthermore, the author established a benefit of qualitative data, as Huberman & Miles (1994) believe,

‘Qualitative data is advocated as the best strategy for discovery and exploring a new area.’

(Huberman., M., A. & Miles., B., M. 1994)

Michael proceeds to identify a benefit of qualitative data that is relevant to this project.

‘Qualitative data is useful when one needs to supplement, validate, or reinterpret quantitative data gathered from the same setting.’

(Huberman., M., A. & Miles., B., M. 1994)
4.5. Qualitative Data Research Process:
The questionnaire included 15 questions, which were replicated within the interview, along with an additional six questions, in order to elicit extended answers. The author will present the qualitative data by identifying the key themes, rather than adopting a question-by-question analysis approach.

Prior to the interview, both employees chose to keep their identities anonymous. As a result, the researcher identifies the interviewees as participant 1 (P1) and participant 2 (P2).

A full transcript of both semi-structured interviews is provided in appendices, pages 90 – 91.

4.6. Analysis of Qualitative Data:
This section will continue with the author identifying the key themes that emerged from the interviews. These key themes included:

- Enthusiasm
- Staff morale with age
- Staff morale in department
- Work productivity
- Technology
- Expenditure

The two participants involved in the interview process were male and female respectively. The male participant (P1) was aged 35 and had been working at the organisation for five years, in which time he had attended three conferences. Participant 2 (P2) was female, aged 50 and had attended eleven conferences during the fifteen years of work at the organisation.
4.6.1. **Enthusiasm:**
The author first distinguished the enthusiasm P1 held for conferences that P2 did not. This was identified when participants provided one word to describe the organisation’s conference style. P1 chose the word:

“Exciting!”

Whereas, P2 described the style:

“Effective.”

Despite both words implying positive impacts, it is clear P2 doesn’t share the same enthusiasm. This is further analysed when participants rated their overall experience of conferences. P1 answered:

“I think they are great. I really look forward to them. Because they’re fun! I like bands... It’s also good to know what’s coming out in the weeks ahead so we know what to tell the customers about.”

However, P2 replied:

“Good. Because I thought the messages were clear and the morale by the end was high.”

Not only does P1’s enthusiastic response suggest a buzz is created, but it also implies the conferences broaden the participant’s music knowledge. On the other hand, P2 provides a positive, yet unenthusiastic response that fails to go into detail. The difference in enthusiasm continues throughout the interview.

4.6.2. **Staff Morale with Age:**
The enthusiasm could be enhanced by the large age gap. This was considered when analysing question 9, referring to the staff morale within stores and head office. The younger participant (P1) answered:

“Definitely. It was like a massive Christmas party.”
P1 justified his opinion, by stating the elements that contributed to improving the staff morale:

“The bands. The free-bar. The awards ceremony.”

However, P2’s response differed, as she considered the difficult trading restricted the staff morale and only noticed a short-term positive impact. This implies P2 views conferences as an opportunity to improve business productivity. This is further enhanced with question 21, identifying whether participants believe the conference style could improve. P2 believes it can, with the reasons:

“A lot of time is spent drinking... I think there is time for the regions and departments to have workshops straight after the speeches to discuss what has been said.”

The author believes the age gap contributes to the difference of enthusiasm, as it is clear P2 would prefer to develop her knowledge through educational activities. Whereas, P1 is keen to learn the organisation’s objectives, whilst engaging with the entertainment.

4.6.3. Staff Morale within Departments:
The following key theme was identified with question 12, when asking participants if the staff morale within their department had improved following the conference. As P1 works within Commercial and P2 works within IT, the author was provided with contrasting data.

Firstly P1 answered, “yes” with the justification:

“I work in the Commercial team. The speech talked through all the planning and work we do as a team in the run up to Christmas. Sometimes the stores don’t realise how much we make Christmas into a success.”

This suggests conferences positively impact P1’s department, as the speeches place emphasis on their hard work. Therefore, encouraging P1’s department to feel appreciated by the organisation, helping to boost the morale.

However P2 replied “no” with the justification:
“I work in IT. We never get much of a mention during the conference. We work just as hard as everybody else but what we do is not seen as being very “sexy” so we get forgotten about.”

This suggests IT doesn’t benefit from conferences, as they fail to incorporate a speech discussing the department’s achievements. Furthermore, P2 believes the staff morale is weakened as IT is excluded from the conferences, due to its negative perception.

4.6.4. Work Productivity:
The author later identified a key theme regarding the participant’s work productivity. When participants were asked if their work productivity improved following the conferences, P1 answered:

“Yes. We could see how important what we do is to the stores so it made us want to check that everything was exactly right for them.”

This implies the conferences highlight the tasks undertaken within the department that support the effectiveness within stores. Therefore, P1 is motivated, as the conferences inform employees how their dedication impacts the organisation.

However, P2 answered:

“No. Not in any meaningful way. We already had clear Christmas plans, which we were already in the process of implementing. Nothing really changed for us as a result of the conference.

This indicates P2’s work productivity was already efficient and the conference failed to improve the work productivity further.

4.6.5. Technology:
Question 8 queried how conferences encourage participant’s understanding of the organisation’s objective to improve. The author noticed both participants considered technology to contribute to their better understanding. Firstly, P1 explained:

“The slides the Chief Executive (Ian Topping) used were very clear and informative and showed a breakdown for each region. The Operations Director focused on service and sales and introduced a bonus scheme to support this.”
P2 supports this with:

“*The slides were clear and the speeches were well-structured.*”

Both responses pinpoint the impact technology can contribute to conferences. The author understands presenting essential information in a creative slide format, encourages engagement and entices employees to develop their understanding.

Furthermore, when explaining how the staff morale improved within stores and head office, P2 applauded technology further:

“*The video showing the key highlights of the past year worked well and was particularly motivating.*”

This reinforces the effectiveness of technology, as it suggests videos are more effective than discussions. Therefore, different formats of technology encourage positive impacts, as P2 felt motivated to continue the organisation’s achievements.

4.6.6. Expenditure:
The final key theme refers to the expenditure of the organisation’s conferences. This was identified with question 20, when asking participants if they believe the conferences benefit the organisation. P2 replied:

“Yes, in that everybody has a good time, but sometimes I worry that it is expensive and we should be spending the money on other things (like improving IT!) The conferences are much bigger than they were when I first started. I’m not sure that all the effort and cost is justified in this retail climate.”

This highlights the issues regarding the key theme, as P2 believes the money spent on conferences could have more benefit if spent on the organisation. Despite conferences providing employees with exciting experiences, P2 argues the cost cannot be justified in the retail climate. Additionally, P2 has observed a growth in conference size within 15 years, which she believes is unnecessary and fails to contribute to improvements.
4.7. Chapter Review:
This chapter has enabled the reader to understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative data, by identifying the characteristics. The author presented both sets of data appropriately, and identified the emerging key themes. The author will now continue to analyse the key themes in greater detail in the ‘Discussion and Analysis of Results’ chapter.
Chapter 5: 
Discussion and Analysis of Results
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1. Chapter Overview:
This chapter will review the primary data and identify emerging key themes. The author is confident the results present valid and reliable data that will allow informed recommendations to be made, which will achieve this study’s overall aim.

5.2. Emerging Key Themes:
The following section will discuss the issues that emerged from the primary research, by considering the similarities and differences. The author will then link the results to the Literature Review in chapter two.

5.2.1 Enthusiasm:
The first key theme identified was the enthusiasm participants shared towards the organisation’s conferences. This was first established with question 6 of the questionnaire, when participants were asked to rate their overall experience of the conferences. The author identified the enthusiasm, as both positive categories obtained the most votes. Likewise, when participants rated the effectiveness of conferences in communicating details of the new product releases, both positive categories achieved the most votes again. This suggests the execution of conferences supports business growth, which encourages enthusiasm. The following question asked participants to select one of the provided words to describe the organisation’s conference style, ‘exciting’ achieved the most votes. The author considers this suggests participants look forward to conferences, strengthening their enthusiasm. The final question asked participants if they would advise other organisations to implement similar conference events to improve morale and business understanding. The results were positive, as 88% chose to advise organisations to implement similar conference events therefore, highlighting the enthusiasm, as participants want to share the positive impacts with other organisations.

The author recognised this key theme to continue throughout the interview, particularly in question 19, referring to the organisation’s conference style. As the semi-structured interview offers flexibility, the author didn’t provide adjectives to this question. That being said, P1 still described the style ‘exciting,’ with the
justification they are fun and provide entertainment. Therefore, both sets of data support the key theme, by highlighting the enthusiasm expressed by participants.

After collating the primary data, the author proceeded to identify the key theme within the Literature Review. In section 2.4 of the Literature Review, Halsey (2010) established corporate events include the event message playing to the “tune of a Broadway musical” and accompanied by performers. This supports P1’s interview response, as it implies entertainment excites and engages attendees therefore, reinforcing their enthusiasm. Additionally, section 2.4.2 supports the key theme further, by exploring the event design, as one can improve the atmosphere and overall conference experience therefore, encouraging participants look forward to attending. This supports the qualitative data as P1 described the organisation’s conferences ‘exciting’ as he always looks forward to them. Furthermore, Bladen et al (2011) indicates the purpose of corporate events is to ‘support business growth.’ Therefore, highlighting the importance of conferences strengthening the enthusiasm of attendees, as they will be enthusiastic to support business growth.

In summary, the author deems this key theme significant as Bladen et al (2011) explains the importance of executing exciting corporate events that achieve the primary purpose. However, research demonstrates a large proportion of participants express their enthusiasm towards the organisation’s conference, due to the various exciting components.

5.2.2. Staff Morale with Age:
The following key theme involved how the participant’s staff morale altered with age. Firstly, question 2 of the questionnaire established the participant’s ages. It was clear the organisation predominantly held an older generation, as the 18 – 23 age bracket had the lowest percentage (3%), whilst the 42 – 49 bracket had the highest percentage (32%). With this understanding, the author examined questions 9 and 10 referring to the impact the conference had upon staff morale within the organisation, by identifying each participant’s age and their results for both questions.

Within the 42 – 49 age bracket, six participants believed the staff morale within stores and head office had ‘improved’ following the conference, along with two
participants considering the staff morale to ‘greatly improve.’ In contrast, one participant within this age bracket considered a ‘slightly worse’ staff morale following the conference. In addition, the oldest age bracket also rated the impact of conferences upon staff morale positively. Furthermore, similar results were retrieved from the younger age brackets, with the additional negative rating. Two participants aged 24 - 29 considered the staff morale to ‘improve’ following the conference. However, one participant aged 30 – 35 considered the staff morale was ‘slightly worse’ following the conference, along with a third negative rating within the 36 – 41 age bracket. Therefore, the author established the three negative responses were accumulated from participants aged 30 – 49. When analysing question 10, referring to the staff morale within departments, the author recognised the negative responses to correlate, as they were also accumulated from participants aged 30 – 49.

However, the qualitative data presents contrasting results, as P1 (aged 35 years old) provided extremely positive data regarding the staff morale. P1 believed the various elements, such as the live bands and speeches contributed a positive impact upon the staff morale. This differs to the quantitative data, as previously participants aged 30 – 49 provided negative ratings. The qualitative data proceeds to differ when analysing P2’s opinion regarding the staff morale, as P2 (aged 50 years old) believed the conference failed to encourage a long-lasting positive effect upon staff morale, due to its inability to incorporate all departments.

In summary, this key theme is inconsistent throughout both sets of data. Prior to analysing, the author considered participants aged 18 – 35 would provide positive data regarding the staff morale. This was considered, as the developments of corporate events suggest the younger generation has experienced more conferences therefore, implying younger participants have a better understanding of the purpose for hosting one. However, the primary data established the unpredictability of this key theme.

5.2.3. Staff Morale within Departments:
The following key theme is similar but involves the alteration of the staff morale regarding the participant’s department. The previous chapter presents a bar chart identifying the various departments each participant works within. The author
recognised the popularity of Commercial, as it obtained the most votes and includes additional departments such as, Commercial Technology. The popularity is again reinforced, as P1 also works within Commercial however, P2 works within IT. The two departments provided contrasting data that support this key theme.

When conducting the interview, participants answered question 12 regarding the conferences impact upon the staff morale within departments. P1 answered positively by recognising the speech discussing the work undertaken within Commercial, which support the effectiveness within stores. This implies P1’s department feels appreciated and motivated following the conference. However, P2 answered negatively and argued IT is excluded from conferences, as it fails to be perceived as “sexy.” As a result, P2’s department is forgotten, which discourages a positive impact upon staff morale. With the analysis of the qualitative data, the author establishes the significance of departments and how each impact staff morale differently.

Similarly, question 10 of the questionnaire asked participants to rate the impact of the conference upon staff morale within their department. From the bar chart, it is clear ‘improved’ gained the most votes (15). However, in order to support the key theme, the author made note of every participant’s department in response to question 10. As Commercial obtained the most participants, the author assumed the ‘improved’ category predominantly consisting of Commercial participants. However, there were only three Commercial participants within this category. In addition, five out of 12 participants considered the conference contributed no impact to their staff morale within Commercial. Along with two out of four believing the staff morale within Commercial was ‘slightly worse’ following the conference. It is clear this contradicts with the quantitative data, as only one participant shares a similar opinion to P1, as this participant expresses the positive impact the conference contributes to the staff morale within Commercial. Furthermore, P2 previously stated the minimum impact the conference contributes to the staff morale within IT, due to the emotion of exclusion. However, the author extracts further contrasting data from the questionnaire, as two participants believed the staff morale within IT had ‘improved’ following the conference.
In summary, this key theme is again considered inconsistent, as both sets of data fail to correlate. Therefore, the author would argue a positive impact to staff morale doesn’t depend on the department, but instead depends on the participant’s work ethic and sense of belonging within their department.

5.2.4. Work Productivity:
The work productivity was also identified as a key theme and first established within the interview. Question 15 referred to the participant’s work productivity, which P1 answered positively, stating his improved as the conference identified the importance of achieving the tasks. Therefore, suggesting the conference improved P1’s work productivity, as he was inspired to accomplish each task. However P2 replied to question 15 negatively, arguing her work productivity didn’t need to improve as she was already focused and completing her tasks therefore arguing nothing changed for her as a result of the conference. The author was surprised with this statement, as it implies the conference fails to instil employees with additional information that can strengthen work productivity. The author also believes this statement supports arguments suggesting conferences are purposeless.

The quantitative data continues to highlight this key theme. Firstly, the author recognised two contrasting categories (‘improved’ and ‘no change’) received the same number of votes within question 11 referring to the staff productivity within stores and head office. The following question concerning the staff productivity within their departments presents further negative data, as ‘no change’ received the most votes. Therefore, the author would argue the analysis demonstrates the conference’s inability to positively impact the staff productivity in all areas of the organisation.

Despite the analysis suggesting the organisation’s conferences fail to improve work productivity, the author researched the Literature Review and established the importance of hosting a conference that improves work productivity. In section 2.3 of the Literature Review, the author explores ‘The History of Corporate Events’ where Halsey (2010) pinpoints the transition of corporate events due to the,
This new perception stressed the importance of a well-executed corporate event, as the end goal was to ‘nurture and motivate employees.’ Therefore, implying conferences must educate employees, in order to improve work productivity. However, HMV’s conference fail to educate employees effectively, as both sets of data represents no significant improvement to participant’s work productivity.

In summary, the author believes the research and analysis have highlighted the significance of this key theme. A conference must instil employees with a sense of urgency, so they understand the importance of improving their work productivity. However, disappointing data was gathered regarding the impact of HMV’s conferences upon work productivity, as no significant improvement was identified, which could have a detrimental effect on the organisation’s future business.

5.2.5. Technology:
The author considers the next key theme the most contemporary, as it involves how the rapid technology developments have provided organisations with new opportunities to improve their business. The qualitative data analysis demonstrates both participants agreeing and considering the technology implemented in conferences contributing to positive impacts. Firstly, question 7 referring to participant’s understanding of the organisation’s objective gathered positive data. P1 believed the presentation showing a clear and informative breakdown for each region benefited his understanding. Likewise P2 agreed and stated the presentations were clear and instilled her with essential information. This suggests presenting imperative information in a creative format with technology increases the likelihood of gaining a better understanding, as participants struggle to engage with a sheet of paper. Furthermore, P2 reiterates the effectiveness of technology with question 9 referring to the staff morale within stores and head office, as she mentions she felt motivated following the video of the organisation’s key highlights.
To support this key theme further, the author chose to analyse questions referring to participant’s understanding of the organisation’s objective prior and following the conference. Question 7 gathered data regarding participants understanding prior to attending the conference, which ‘clear’ obtained the most votes. However, question 8 referring to participants understanding following the conference showed a significant improvement. Not only did the two positive categories obtain the most votes, but also the ‘extremely clear’ category increased by 12 participants. As the questionnaire consists of close-ended questions, the author is unable to offer valid suggestions explaining the increase. However, with the qualitative data analysis, the author trusts the implementation of technology contributing to the improving participant’s understanding.

The author discovered several ideas within the Literature Review that continue to support this key theme. In section 2.4.2, the author examines how the revived elements of event design can benefit corporate events. Firstly, Rankin (2007) identifies new methods to light a venue, which Halsey (2010) expresses the significance of as,

‘Lighting is one of the most important aspects of a successful design.’

(Halsey. 2010)

Furthermore, Shone and Parry (2013) note the development of sound, by highlighting how events would,

‘Historically only include a microphone and a couple of loudspeakers.’

(Shone and Parry. 2013)

However, it is clear sound has improved, as audiences are now able to hear, regardless of their position in large venues and its ability to create an atmosphere, which effectively engages audiences.

Furthermore, section 2.7 of the Literature Review explores ‘The Future of Corporate Events.’ Firstly, Halsey (2010) expresses ‘the rapid evolvement of video technology,’ which correlates with P2’s previous response mentioning the effectiveness of the
video. *Halsey (2010)* proceeds to explain corporate events are now in a position to use technology to their advantage, as it enables easier promotion and engages audiences through creative techniques, which the author firmly agrees with. Therefore, the analysis of section 2.7 establishes the continuing development of technology, which will only improve the execution and delivery of conferences.

In summary, technology is deemed a significant key theme as both sets of data establish the impact technology contributes to conferences. Not only does it encourage participants to engage and feel motivated, but it also creates an atmosphere that allows participants to relax. Furthermore, the *Literature Review* highlights the importance of examining this key theme, by pinpointing how future developments will benefit the industry further.

5.2.6. **Expenditure:**

This final key theme focuses on the expenditure that is invested in the organisation’s conferences. Firstly, question 20 of the interview regarding the participant’s opinion whether conferences are beneficial to the organisation gathered interesting data. Despite P2 describing the organisation’s conferences as effective and believing they are beneficial in the sense everyone has a good time, P2 also expresses her concerns. She believes conferences are expensive and the money should be allocated to improving facilities within departments. P2 proceeds to explain the increase in conference size observed over 15 years, have failed to contribute to significant improvements thereby, signalling the excessive expenditure is unnecessary.

With regards to quantitative data, question 14 was analysed, which required participants to select one of the provided words to describe the organisation’s conference style. Prior to analysing, the author predicted ‘extravagant’ to receive the most votes, as the author had previously gained personal experience of the organisation’s conferences and considered the lavish products and services made the event ‘extravagant.’ Therefore, the author was surprised to discover ‘extravagant’ gained no votes, which suggests the organisation's conferences do not invest in excessive expenditures.
This key theme is further enhanced in section 2.2 of the Literature Review, where the author provides an ‘Overview of Events.’ Firstly, Shone and Parry (2013) identify the developments, as previously events were ‘uncomplicated and needed no extensive managerial expertise.’ The developments are further reinforced as Halsey (2010) states ‘year after year, more and more bells and whistle were added.’ Therefore, the author believes the developments also encouraged people’s expectations to rise, resulting with copious amounts of money being spent on events, to encourage a memorable experience.

However, when referring this to conferences, section 2.5 of the Literature Review was analysed, where Bladen et al (2011) defines a corporate event ‘with a primary purpose of supporting business growth.’ The author considers this puts forward two arguments. Firstly, it can argue excessive expenditure is required when hosting conferences, as the money will be spent on incorporating elements that encourage captivated and engaged attendees therefore, focusing attendees and ensuring the primary purpose is achieved. Secondly, it could argue excessive expenditure isn’t required when hosting conferences as the event is executed to support business growth, not entertain attendees therefore, implying deeming the additional elements unnecessary. With both arguments in mind, the author believes it difficult to distinguish the expenditure required when hosting conferences that achieve the primary purpose.

In summary, the author deems this key theme the most controversial, yet interesting to examine. The analysis of both sets of data and Literature Review establish an inconsistent argument regarding the expenditure of conferences. Therefore, the author believes it is difficult to pinpoint the appropriate cost of an effective conference that achieves the primary purpose and, instead believes it depends on the organisation’s business.

5.3. Chapter Review:
This chapter has enabled the reader to grasp a clear insight to the key themes previously mentioned in Chapter 4. The author explored each key theme in greater detail, by extracting relevant information from both sets of data and the Literature Review. The analysis enabled the author to discuss information that either agreed or
disagreed with each key theme, which provides the reader with an opportunity to explore the various arguments surrounding the research project. The study will now continue with a formal presentation of the recommendations.
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Chapter Overview:
The author will begin to conclude the research project by identifying the achievement of each original objective, which can be found in Chapter 1 in section 1.6. A personal reflection of the author’s research journey will follow, by identifying both positive and negative experiences and establishing how the author developed throughout the research process. Lastly, a list of the author’s recommendations will conclude the final chapter of the project.

6.2. Summary of Findings:
The author believes this project has successfully achieved each objective.

1. To critically review the current literature relating to corporate events and social culture within organisations.

In Chapter 2, the reader was provided with an extensive insight to the literature surrounding corporate events and the social culture within organisations. In section 2.2, the author provided the reader with a clear analysis of the events industry by differentiating its characteristics. The investigation of the history of corporate events followed, which established the various developments the sector has experienced. With a clear understanding to the large scope the sector has evolved into, the author could pinpoint how corporate events benefit organisations. In section 2.6, the author examined the social culture to ensure the second part of this objective was complete. This enabled the reader to understand the significant impact corporate events contribute to organisation’s social culture. The final section of the Literature Review studies ‘The Future of Corporate Events’ (section 2.7), which the author deems important, as it reinforces the significance of researching this topic.

Therefore, the author believes the secondary research conducted in Chapter 2 ensured this objective to successfully be met.
1. To undertake primary research data collection with representatives from HMV to assess the impact of corporate events on social culture within that organisation.

As previously mentioned in the Methodology, the author gained both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Despite the ethics application form stating 50 representatives from HMV would participate in the questionnaire, the author was satisfied with the data acquired from the 34 representatives. Furthermore, the author was pleased to conduct semi-structured interviews to two representatives from HMV, as she believed the qualitative data highlighted the key themes that support the study’s overall aim.

Therefore, the author considers the two primary research methods ensured the achievement of this objective. By doing so, strengthened the reader’s understanding of the study’s aim, by outlining the various key themes that were accumulated from the results.

1. To review and analyse the primary data, presenting the results using a variety of formats.

The achievement of this objective was important to the author, as she understands the primary data must be presented in a logical fashion to gain a full understanding. Therefore, the author presented the quantitative data in various bar graphs and pie charts. Not only does the neat layout encourage the reader to be interested, but it also assists with the reader’s comprehension, allowing a greater understanding to the research project.

However, as the semi-structured interview questions elaborated from the questionnaire, the author understood a replicate of each question would not benefit the study and be tedious for the reader. Therefore, an appropriate approach was applied when presenting the qualitative data, by only presenting the necessary responses that supported the discussed key themes. Therefore, the author believes the representation of the primary data found in Chapter 4 achieves this objective.
1. To consolidate the research findings by identifying and explaining how corporate events influence social culture based on the HMV case study.

Within the *Discussion and Analysis of Results* chapter the author consolidated the primary data and identified the emerging key themes. The discussion of each key theme enabled the author to respond to this objective and explore the various ways a corporate event influences social culture.

Therefore, the author believes to meet this objectives, as the findings have enabled arguments to be discussed surrounding the influence corporate events have on social culture and how corporate events can be altered, in order to improve social culture.

1. To offer recommendations that will benefit other organisations to appreciate how corporate events can positively influence social culture.

As previously mentioned, the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews gathered both quantitative and qualitative data therefore, the author was provided with valid and reliable data. Not only does this enable the author’s project to benefit future researchers, but also allows the author to offer recommendations. These recommendations will encourage other organisations to appreciate corporate events, as they will now have an understanding to the ways in which corporate events can positively influence social culture.

Therefore, the author believes the thorough research and analysis conducted throughout the project, has enabled the fifth and final objective to be met.

In summary, the author is pleased to establish the completion of all five objectives, as this suggests the project will benefit organisations and students. If a student decides to research a similar topic, they are now provided with an opportunity to use the author’s primary data based on HMV’s conferences and compare it with their own primary data, based on an alternative organisation. Therefore, the author is satisfied with completion of objectives and how they have contributed to the study’s overall aim.
6.3. **Personal Reflection:**
As this project was completed over a six-month period, the importance of completing the project to the author’s best ability was acknowledged. As a result, the author encountered both positive and negative experiences during the research process. These contrasting experiences have established what the author would change, if the project were to be repeated, along with identifying various ways in which the author has developed as a researcher.

One negative aspect of the project was the author’s inability to obtain the number of research responses proposed in the ethics application form. This limits the reliability of the primary data gathered therefore, limiting the effectiveness of the overall study. Therefore, if the author were to repeat the study, she would contact the representatives from HMV well in advance, in hope to gain at least 50 responses. By doing so, will provide the author with a wider array of primary data allowing a deeper analysis of results.

However, despite this limitation, the author gained a very beneficial experience when completing this project. Over the six-month period, the author identified various ways in which she has developed. Prior to the project, the author had only conducted primary research on a small scale. However, by conducting primary research on a much larger scale during this process, has enabled the author’s research skills to broaden. In addition, the author’s referencing skills have also developed. This skill has predominantly been enhanced as the Literature Review required extensive research, which resulted with a wide array of references. Furthermore, investigating a topic of particular interest has provided the author with an opportunity to gain a deeper insight to corporate events, which she believes will benefit her future career within the industry.

6.4. **Recommendations:**
The following points are the recommendations provided for organisations, in order to benefit their business and positively impact their social culture.

1. **Allocate the organisation’s funds to benefit the employees**
After analysing the data gathered from the representatives of HMV, the author established employees are concerned with the amount of money spent of each conference. In order to solve this issue, the author believes the organisation’s money should be allocated to the appropriate areas in need of improving, such as the department facilities.

Therefore, the author deems it important to offer this recommendation, to encourage organisations to allocate the money appropriately. Not only will this improve the employee’s working conditions, but also it will contribute a positive impact upon the staff morale.

2. **Apply effective technology when delivering corporate events**

The qualitative data analysis established the effectiveness of implementing technology and the impact it contributes to employee’s business understanding and event experience. Furthermore, section 2.7 of the *Literature Review* identifies the various ways technology will impact the future of corporate events. Therefore, the author believes the findings have highlighted how technology can benefit an organisation’s social culture.

With this in mind, the author deems it crucial to recommend organisations to apply effective technology to corporate events, as it will allow organisations to demonstrate they are keeping up to date with current trends of technology and encourage employees to gain a better business understanding.

3. **Incorporate an element of entertainment to corporate events**

In section 2.4 of the *Literature Review*, the author explores ‘The Development of Corporate Events’ which makes it apparent successful corporate events must incorporate an element of entertainment. However, the following section of the *Literature Review, Bowdin et al (2011)* mentions,

> ‘Corporate events are produced with a primary purpose of supporting business growth.’
This suggests, the element of entertainment must not dominate the conference and the main objective must still be accomplished. Therefore, when offering this recommendation, organisations must understand the entertainment must not interfere with the accomplishment of the main objective.

In summary, the author believes the recommendations provide organisations with an opportunity to improve their corporate events, and positively influence their social culture.

6.5. **Chapter Review:**

Overall, the author views this project as a positive experience. Within this chapter, the author demonstrated the achievement of each objective that allowed appropriate recommendations to be made. The author also justified why she considered the experience positively, due to the various ways in which the process has enabled her to grow and develop her skills that are deemed essential within the events industry.

To conclude the project, each chapter has provided the author with a clear understanding of the various ways in which corporate events influence social culture. Furthermore, the author learnt excessive expenditure isn’t required when hosting corporate events and, organisations should be more concerned with the overall production of business. Therefore, the author considers the study’s aim to be fulfilled and is satisfied with the completion of this research project.
References


