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SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES AND SATISFACTION AMONG EVENT ATTENDEES TOWARDS FOOD FESTIVALS IN SHAH ALAM

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Abstract:

Food festivals have emerged as one of the most culturally and socially prominent phenomena today. Such festivals offer ample scope for building community involvement and creating growth. Yet the growing interest and popularity of food festivals around the world raise doubts regarding their environmental, economic and social sustainability. In this regard, this research seeks to explore the relationship between sustainable practices, and the level of satisfaction among the audience members at the food festivals in Shah Alam, Malaysia. In the current situation, the rapid development of the practice of organising various food festivals, and its positive popularity have brought several challenges associated with the environmental, economic and social impacts of the festivals. Food festivals organisers need to adopt sustainable practices to solve problems related to plastic waste generation, food waste, energy consumptions and others. The population in terms of this research will be represented by adults who attend food festivals in Shah Alam; the target sample size of 384 participants. The research is going to be conducted using a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. Data were collected from respondents using close-ended questionnaires that were distributed on Google forms. 408ppp adults, aged eighteen years and above, were involved in this study and data were analysed using SPSS. The study adopted several hypotheses in testing the relationship between sustainable practices and attendee satisfaction. Findings from this study indicate that the level of attendee satisfaction depended on the application of sustainable practices. Attendees showed positive attitudes towards

green practices including recycling and waste reduction. Factors such as demographic characteristics including the age and knowledge about sustainability were found to influence attendee experience. Reliability analysis was done to validate the effect of sustainability practices on the level of satisfaction. Areas that needed improvement in event planning were identified based on the results. This research adds to the knowledge base in event management through provision of recommendations that will assist event planners and policy makers improve sustainability and increase attendee satisfaction. Although the study is confined to the Shah Alam area, it may serve as a good foundation for future studies in other locations.

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Attendee Satisfaction, Environmental Impact, Event Management, Food Festivals, Sustainability Practices, Sustainable Event Planning, Recycling, Waste Reduction



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Introduction

Food fests have become one of the most important categories within the worldwide event management industry, providing an outlet for food enjoyment as well as a means of boosting tourism, culture sharing, and socio-economic development. The rising popularity of these events in recent years has increased the importance of addressing their effects on the environment, society, and economy. This situation has increased the necessity for considering sustainable practices while planning and managing food festivals to ensure their viability and sustainable use of resources (Garcia-Pena et al, 2022).

The term sustainability can be described as meeting present-day needs without jeopardising the future generations' ability to meet their needs. Sustainability has become an important approach in modern event management, having undergone a lot of changes, since its initial conception. This concept is also applied in various economic sectors, including the tourism and hospitality industries. In organising food festivals, sustainability takes shape through environmental measures, such as efforts to reduce waste and conserve energy, social approaches involving community participation and engagement, and technological advancements for efficient operations with minimum ecological impacts (Seočanac, 2022; Werner et al., 2020).

Food festivals have become very popular in Malaysia, especially in Shah Alam, where many people flock to attend, including locals and visiting tourists. These food festivals highlight the rich cultural heritage associated with Malaysian cuisine, as well as helping with the socio-economic growth of the city. However, the increasing number of these food festivals has also

resulted in an increase in environmental problems, such as pollution due to excessive use of plastics, poor waste management, and higher energy consumption (Hassanli et al., 2021; Kloskowski & Kwiatkowski, 2021).

While there have been many efforts towards sustainability, research regarding the impact of same attendee satisfaction is still scanty. Attendee satisfaction plays an important role in determining the success and sustainability of the event, as it acts as an indicator of whether the attendees will become regular customers of the business or have the potential to recommend the event to others. Research shows that although attendees are becoming more sensitive towards environmentally and socially responsible behaviours, there exist variations in terms of awareness and perceptions (Hsu et al., 2022; Mair & Smith, 2022).

In addition to this, sustainability in event management is multifaceted in terms of technology, society, and environment. Technological sustainability refers to the implementation of innovative digital technologies that help achieve efficiency and minimise resource consumption. Social sustainability is associated with inclusivity, social involvement, and culture sustainability. Environmental sustainability encompasses aspects such as waste management, energy conservation, and resources management. These various facets of sustainability interact and influence the satisfaction of attendees needs further investigation, specifically in relation to food festivals in Shah Alam.

For this reason, the current research will focus on analysing the link between sustainability strategies and attendee satisfaction in food festivals in Shah Alam. Through the use of quantitative methodology, this paper strives to provide empirical contributions to the knowledge on the impact of different aspects of sustainability on attendee perceptions and experiences. It would be presumed that the findings from this analysis would contribute theoretically and practically to research within event management and events themselves. In doing so, the current study can bridge the gap in existing aspects.

Literature Review

The growing importance of sustainability at the global level has had a profound effect on the event management industry, especially in relation to food festivals. As food festivals become more popular, questions concerning their impact on the environment, society, and technology have gained prominence. This literature review aims to examine the existing literature on sustainability practices.

Sustainability in Event Management

In event management, sustainability involves incorporating practices that consider issues of environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and economic feasibility when organising events. This idea comes from the larger principles of sustainable development, which was described as meeting current needs without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Recent studies emphasise the three most important factors concerning sustainable practices at events, namely technology, social and environment, and all of which have a major influence on participants' perception and level of satisfaction.

Technological Sustainability Practices

Modern technological developments have revolutionised the events industry through increased operational efficiency and decreased environmental effects. Such technological innovations as digital tickets, contactless payments, and advanced garbage sorting devices are aimed at achieving greater sustainability (Choi & Sirakaya-Turk, 2020; Raza et al., 2021).

Digital tickets, for example, reduce paper waste and increase convenience for attendees. Raza et al (2021) mentioned that these methods let attendees lack of physical tickets and by authenticate the tickets via their smartphones, therefore managing paper use. Through this approach seen that is environmentally friendly and has an added advantage of saving organisers a lot of time that would have been spent on such paper works. Cashless payment systems, on the other hand, make payments efficient and transparent, resulting in reduced costs and administrative work (Aguila & King, 2020; Lee & Smith, 2021).

Waste management systems, which incorporate sensor technology and analytics, improve the process of collecting and recycling waste, thus minimising its environmental footprint (Tan & Won, 2019). Information gathered can help to recognise the type of wastes produced and make appropriate recommendations that would help prevent them at other occasions. Waste collected can be decreased by up to 30%, if means of collection and recycling system are optimised. However, on the other hand, there is evidence that shows and additional technologies that are used in the segregated recycling process like sorting robotics, make recycling practices more efficient and friendly to the environment (Wang & Zhou).

New technologies such as VR and AR enable virtual participation, which not only lowers travel carbon emissions but also make events more accessible (Carter & Nash, 2021; Rahman & Ismail, 2022). The integration of such technologies is not only beneficial for sustainability purposes but also increases participant satisfaction. Recently, the feature of attending meetings virtually is determined as more organizations embrace both technologies. The use of VR allows the attendees to experience the event from a different perspective as they are provided with activities that let them wander round the festival, access demonstrations or visit stand of their choice even if they are not physically at the event. Measures like these assist event promoters to reach more people at the same time avoiding organization of massive events that are very describe undesirable in terms of environmental impact. Augmented Reality (AR) creates on-site services that include features like interactive virtual tours, 3D information boards and more comprehensive educational information. For instance, AR can navigate attendees to the event and provide real-time information and recommendations; hence enhance attendee satisfaction levels while at the same time minimizing environmental impacts of the event (Carter & Nash, 2021). In the specific context of post-pandemic event recovery, Ariza-Colpas et al (2023) frame AR as one of several technological adaptations that allowed event organizers to reduce in-person density and physical resources throughput while still sustaining attendee engagement – positioning AR's sustainability contribution as a resource-substitution mechanism rather than merely a satisfaction driver.

Empirical support for the mechanism-level claims in your energy paragraph comes from Alhawamdeh et al. (2023), who tested rather than merely listed the relationship between energy management practices and sustainable tourism outcomes. Using PLS-SEM on data from Jerash, Jordan, the study found that energy awareness, energy efficiency, and energy knowledge each had a significant positive influence on sustainable tourism development, and

that these variables also significantly influenced top management commitment, which in turn mediated and strengthened their effect on sustainability outcomes. This is a more meaningful and powerful statement than “Smart energy management facilitates the observation of consumption.” The claim is that sustainability benefit of the technology is mediated by the organizations’ commitment to sustainability not the technology itself. This gives you a citable basis to argue that your Shah Alam food festivals findings should also examine organizer energy awareness/commitment, not only the presence of energy-saving hardware (Rahman & Ismail, 2022).

Water management is also a very important factor in which use of technology to adopt sustainable measures is felt. Automated systems for managing consumptions of water during events significantly minimize water wastage. Proper water restricted taps, appropriate flushing systems, and the proper treatment of the grey water which reflects the reclaimed used water from the oven, basin, bath, laundry etc. which can also be used at the event place can also be installed. In addition, through digital platforms attendees can be informed regarding wise use of water and other necessities of life and make them responsible citizens (Brown & Khan, 2021). Hu, Ying, Lovelock, and Mager (2023) fill this gap directly. Their longitudinal policy analysis of water demand management (WDM) in the hotel industry identified five converging categories of water-saving technology and practice: water pricing strategies, management and regulatory solutions, engineering and technical instruments, education and involvement programmes, and alternate sources of water for nonportable purposes. Within the engineering/technical category, the most structurally central and consistently prioritized measures across two decades of policy documents were leakage detection and alleviation, water audits, water-efficient irrigation systems, on-site used-water recycling, and rainwater harvesting/retention — giving you citable, specific technologies to replace the currently uncited "restricted taps, appropriate flushing systems" language.

Social Sustainability Practices

Social sustainability promotes inclusiveness, community involvement, and stakeholder welfare. Social sustainability as stated by Irimiás et al. (2024) can be described as the idea that there is a reliance on social capital, which includes relationships, trust, and values. Social sustainability at food festivals is ultimately about people, not just programming whether attendees feel welcome, whether the host community feels seen rather than used, and whether the relationships built during the event outlast it. Irimiás et al. (2024) discuss this problem using the concept of capital, wherein economic capital forms the basis, while cultural capital (knowledge and skills) and social capital (networking) define the success or failure of a festival by determining whether the festival enriches the community or merely exploits it. The interaction between these various types of capital differs based on time and location of the festival, and that is why generic sustainability solutions do not work.

Food festivals are a potential avenue to enhance social connections, cultural interaction, and build integration. Some of the ways through which this can be done include encouraging the development of local business, maintenance of culture, and accessibility, amongst others that can aid social sustainability in their organization (Werner et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2021). Additionally, such actions have the potential to increase the value added to the food festivals and assist in developing pride in the communities. Accessible infrastructure is one of the best ways of judging social sustainability. It involves more than just physical aspects, such as ramps and signage, and transportation; social and financial accessibility plays a crucial role in making

the event accessible to all members of community, regardless of age, economic status and background (Irimiás et al., 2024). The importance of this assumes that food festivals do not automatically promote inclusivity. According to Irimiás et al. (2024), the potential of festivals to strengthen community relations depends on existing social capital and power relations in the location. In most cases, the festival ends up reaching those audience who have the financial means to attend them, despite the intentions of bridging the community. This is what happened in the case analyzed by Thelen and Kim (2024): local community distrust, unequal participations, and ambiguous or homogenized presentation of local traditions are the factors that prevent social sustainability, not the lack of intentions, but rather a lack of true community authorship of the way the culture is presented. This research is valuable because it addresses the barrier – and there is a serious lack of them in the food festivals sustainability literature.

Community partnerships are where this gets addressed in practice. The charitable donations, volunteering activities in waste management and stewardship, and local recruitment help make community members rather than mere spectators in the event. However, true partnership happens when there is a proper cooperations between organizers and locals, and according to Suharto & Jamali (2023), sustainable practices at such festivals involve respecting and bringing to public attention the regional traditions. Indeed, cultural heritage is a matter of design and cannot be viewed as an accidental result, promoting local cuisine, music, dances, and crafts can be socially sustainable if the community itself designs and regulates its promotion in line with the concept of “staged authenticity” described by Le et al. (2024) in MacCannell’s original framework.

However, elements associated with social stratifications and inclusivity need to be emphasized while organizing food festivals. There are some elements that are going to attract certain layers of the society, which might result in marginalized groups being deprived of the opportunity to participate (Irimiás et al., 2024).

On the other hand, safety and education are of more personal nature and still contribute to the very concept of social sustainability in questions. Trained volunteers, first-aid stations, and training courses related to safety and sustainability practice indicate to festivalgoers that their health is taken into consideration seriously (Richards & Leal, 2022). In turn, according to Ossowska et al. (2023), food festivals represent small ecosystems where business and social spheres merge in a way, with the value provided by them being relational rather than financial one since the main purpose of holding such festivals in rural regions is the establishment of communication between various social communities that are not likely to interact with each other otherwise.

The actual contribution of social sustainability is also made in the form of satisfaction of guests after attending an event. It has been proven that if attendees feel safe, accepted, and part of some kind of larger community, then they will be more likely to walk away with a good experience and will be more willing to come back for future events (Richard & Leal, 2022). The idea is strongly supported by the core principles of Social Exchange Theory that people tend to seek for those experiences which they believe are worth their time and efforts (Agyeiwaah & Zhao, 2024). In other words, when an event gives back to its attendees, whether through a sense of belonging, community, or simply making them feel valued, attentive people are more likely to remember the experience. Thus, this can become a helpful evaluative criterion this research since social sustainability, not only implies actions of the event itself, but the actual perception of them by its host community.

Environmental Sustainability Practices

With the events industry on the continuing rise, sustainability is no longer an option but a necessity. All events, if not managed well, have the potential to damage the environment by emitting high carbon emissions, consuming high amount of resources and high volume of waste products. Arranging a food festival is especially difficult because it is a highly packaging related-event, involving a lot of single use plastics. Food waste is an issue because it's thrown out all at once, and processing and recycling is very complex. Poor disposal systems result in littering and localised pollution. In addition, large quantities of organic waste are disposed of in landfills, which generate methane, a powerful greenhouse gas and add to the environmental impact of such events (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2024; Mair et al., 2024; Dodds et al., 2022). Indeed, eco-friendly event management is gaining traction, but it heavily relies on the engagement level of participants, as well as their behavioural change. It may not be enough to have sustainable policies in place or recycling bins if participants are not environmentally conscious or motivated to recycle. Consequently, event organisers must supplement environmental actions with education and behavioural change strategies to promote active involvement in sustainable actions (Collins et al., 2024; Mair et al., 2024).

Waste management is one of the most multifaceted environmental challenges for food festivals. The absolute volume of waste generated during and after these events, ranging from food surpluses to disposable packaging, demand structured and deliberate management strategies. To address this problem, event managers are now introducing garbage segregation and composting to mitigate these negative impacts. By providing clearly marked bin to segregate paper, plastics, and organic wastes, recycling activities become easier for event participants, leading to reduced used of landfills. In addition, composting helps to convert food wastes and disposable biodegradable products into natural soil conditioners, which help in supporting local agriculture and in achieving sustainability within communities (Mair & Smith, 2022). Although composting and recycling help in diverting a substantial portion of the waste from landfill sites, previous research indicates that these practices have significant success in relation to the participation of event participants in these processes.

In addition to waste management, the other equally important problem is that of food safety in relation to food festivals and similar events. There are many food handlers who join the field without proper education in food safety and hygiene protocol. According to Yahya Ahmad Sayuti et al. (2022), lack of formal education leads to significant deficiencies in preparedness, particularly in the performance of food handlers. It implies that although many people have practice, it does not make up for the deficiency of structured knowledge about food safety and hygiene issues, which should receive more attention both from the side of event organizers and relevant authorities. Moreover, food safety should be addressed not only on aspects of public health, but also as one of environmental sustainability. Food safety violations lead to food spoilage and wastage, which means that there will be more organic waste produced during food festivals.

Energy consumptions is a significant issue. The use of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power and energy efficient systems, such as LED lighting, can significantly decrease carbon emissions (Hawkins & Lee, 2021; Rahman & Ismail, 2022). Furthermore, water conservation measures, including the use of low flow fixtures and cleaning methods can promote sustainable resource management (Brown & Khan, 2021). Although the use of renewable energy sources has several environmental benefits, several limitations exist that

prevent the incorporation of renewable energy sources within events. Event organizers have to consider several economic factors, especially in community-based food festivals, the use of renewable energy sources may be expensive to invest in. Future studies will, thus focus on the feasibility of adopting renewable energy sources.

Environmental practices at events aren't just an operational matter, they shape how attendees experience and remember the event itself. Research consistently shows that when events visibly commit to environmental responsibility, attendees tend to walk away with a more favourable impression overall (Mair, Trendafilova & Werner, 2024; Collins, Koenig-Lewis & Mair, 2024). Suharto and Jamali (2023), for instance, found that sustainable festival practices don't just cut environmental impact, they also strengthen community engagement and enrich the overall experience for those attending. González-Viralta et al. (2023) build on this, showing that green practices genuinely shape customer satisfaction, which in turn feeds into loyalty, word-of-mouth, and even a willingness to pay more. This matters a lot for food festivals specifically. When these events are seen as environmentally responsible, people are more likely to come back, and more likely to tell others to go too. Still, sustainability efforts need to be handled with care. Push too hard without thinking it through, and convenience or service quality can end up taking the hit, which risks undoing the very goodwill organisers are trying to build. So, the real challenge lies in weaving environmental responsibility into the visitor experience in a way that feels seamless rather than sacrificial, because that's what turns a one-time positive impression into lasting loyalty (González-Viralta et al., 2023; Mair et al., 2024). Recent research highlights the significance of applying the concept of circular economy to event management. Instead of using a linear model of "take-make-dispose," circular event management encourages reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery of resources throughout the life cycle of an event. Applying the use of reusable food packaging, refilling stations for water, and sustainable sourcing of resources helps generate less waste and promotes environmental sustainability (Baxter & Gallagher, 2024)

Attendee Satisfaction in Food Festivals

Attendee satisfaction is critically important to ensuring a successful event, because attendees are more likely to return and recommend the event to others. Their satisfaction can also boost the event's overall longevity. According to Hsu et al (2022), satisfaction is essentially an emotion felt after someone evaluates his experience. To figure out what drives this feeling, researchers highlighted elements such as the benefits of hosting the event organised, the quality of service provided, and the overall welcoming and eco-friendly atmosphere (Elnagar & Khalaf, 2023)

Additionally, higher levels of positive emotions, such as being delighted by appreciating green initiatives, can create fond memories and strengthen the bond between the event and the attendees. This in turn increases their satisfactions and loyalty to continue enjoying the experience in the future (Hsu et al., 2022).

Environmental Attitudes

Behaviour and satisfaction significantly influence attendee attitudes. The Theory of Planned Behaviour suggests that individuals with positive environmental attitudes are more likely to engage in sustainable practices, such as recycling and supporting eco-friendly initiatives (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). Ramli, Ghazali, Rashid, Nordin, and Zamzuri (2024) tested an extended

TPB model specifically on festival attendees' decisions to attend eco-friendly events, incorporating subjective norms, anticipated emotions, and perceived behavioural control alongside attitude. This finding needs to be highlighted especially due to the fact that it contradicts the simplistic approach that you have taken in your draft, "positive attitude leads to ecofriendly behaviour." The reason is that while attitude did not contribute much, the other three did. This suggests attendees may hold favourable environmental attitudes without those attitudes translating into action the classic attitude behaviour gap and that social and emotional factors may do more explanatory work than attitude alone. This is a stronger, more critical framing than simply stating that favourable attitudes lead to eco-friendly engagement (Celuch, 2021).

Social Norms

Social norms also shape attendee behaviour. According to Social Cognitive Theory, individuals' attitude is influenced by the actions of others within their social environment (Rodrigues et al., 2023). Observation of peers engaging in sustainable practices can encourage similar behaviour, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of sustainability initiatives. Babatunde et, al (2022) found that social norms have been identified as the most influential factor for driving energy-saving behaviours, followed by perceived behaviour control. This suggests that effective interventions and policies aimed at promoting sustainable energy practices among university students should prioritise strengthening social influences and enhancing individuals' sense of control over actions. This empirically supports Rodrigues et al.'s (2023) SCT-based claim that perceived social norms shape sustainable behaviour at events, and it gives you a specific mechanism: attendees appear more responsive to what others expect of them and to the anticipated emotional payoff of sustainable participation (pride, guilt-avoidance) than to their own stated environmental values. The tension between stated sustainability values and actual behaviour shows up concretely in food waste research. Zhang and Zhang (2024) found that the "Camera Eats First" phenomenon photographing food before eating, driven by social media sharing norms measurably moderates food waste behaviour at food festivals, meaning a purely social/experiential behaviour (photo-sharing norms) interacts with and can undercut sustainability outcomes.

Technological Influence

The adoption of sustainable technologies is influenced by perceived usefulness and ease of use, as explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (Al-Qaysi et al., 2020). Technologies that are user-friendly and efficient are more likely to be accepted and adopted. This advantage greatly underwrites to higher levels of contentment among individuals.

In food festivals, this takes the form of the ticketing system and the virtual engagement tools, whereby the success of the mobile ticketing system does not just lie in its existence but rather its seamlessness, convenience, and security for the user. The systematic literature review conducted by Sjukriana, Hanafiah, Asyraff, and Kusumah (2025) demonstrates that this trend also applies specifically to event technologies, whereby in 33 cases examined regarding the use of VR, AI and mobile apps at hospitality and tourism events, the success of participant use was determined by ease of use, usefulness, social influence, and privacy whereas the criteria for the organizers were completely different, namely cost-efficiency and integration. This is a valuable insight for your framework; participant adoption and organizer adoption are based on different criteria and confusing them (as it happens in technology and sustainability discussion

in general) can explain the failure of many technologies which have good intentions behind them.

This extends well beyond digital ticketing system. Habachi, Palau-Saumell, and Matute (2024) discovered that event application technology influences not only the logistics, but also the degree of emotional attachment to the location of an event. Moreover, this emotional attachment translates to actions, for instance by influencing repurchase or recommendation intentions. Thus, it seems that using technology at festivals cannot be explained simply through the functional aspect such as decisions. The usage of an application may enhance the emotional attachment to the event venue and, therefore, evoke a sense of loyalty.

This has a directly related to the issues of satisfaction and word-of-mouth, which is where the role of technology is magnified. As pointed out by Dimitrovski et al. (2021) identify satisfaction as a key driver of festival image and word-of-mouth. Conversely, Elnagar and Khalaf (2023) take this argument further stating that is the level of satisfaction which allows festivals to be sustainable through repeat attendance, motivated by the feeling of being satisfied. And once again, the roles of technology will be taking this matters, by ensuring that if there is an effective way to get tickets or engage with the event, then there would be less frustration among the guests which would make them feel more satisfied with the visit; in contrast, an ineffective method would lead to frustration that people will want to talk about without being asked.

This is also where the interface between technology and sustainability intersect most concretely. Eco-friendly systems of infrastructure, waste management systems, and energy-efficiency are becoming more dependent on the same digital layer referred to the including above sensor-operated trash cans, sustainability messaging apps, and digital tickets to avoid any paper waste the attendees' growing expectation of environmentally responsible events is, in practice, an expectation that technology will be doing some of that work invisibly (Elnagar & Khalaf, 2023). In this view, the technological factor influence isn't a separate driver from sustainability practice; it's frequently the delivery mechanism for it.

In conclusion, this entire sequence technology adoption → reduced friction → satisfaction → loyalty and trust developed the driving force behind revisit intention. Yulianto (2023) argues in orders to understand why theme-oriented festivals receive repeated visits it is necessary to identify key characteristics of event quality which contribute to building trust, and in so doing links this to perceived value and satisfaction. The festival experience, here, is the outcome, while technology is one of the more manageable factors that event organizers can use in shaping the experience with a view to encouraging loyalty rather than one-off attendance.

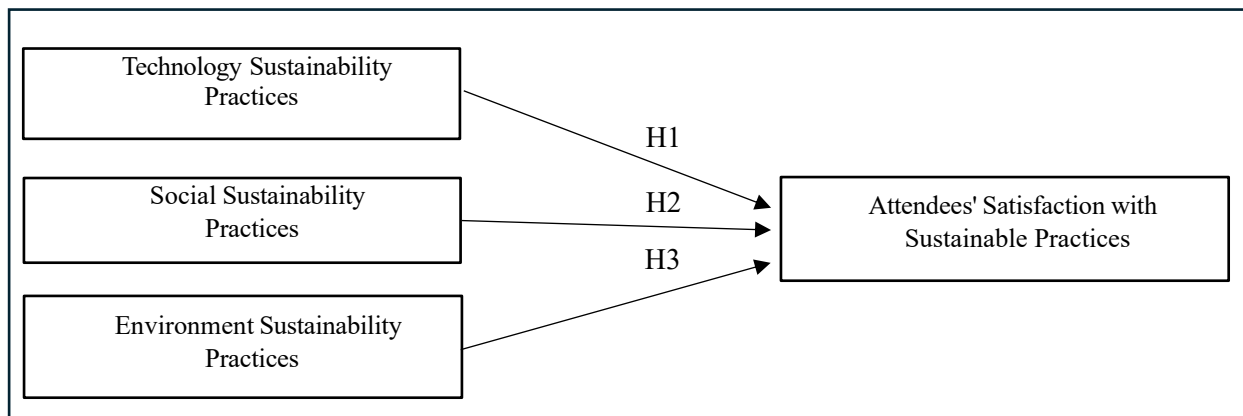


Figure 1: Research Framework

Research Design

This study examines how technology, social, and environmental sustainability practices in Shah Alam food festivals affect participant satisfaction. The project will use a cross-sectional research design as proposed by Wand & Cheng (2020). This quantitative strategy design method is descriptive, and it is ideal for gathering current information on practice and attendance perception as well as assessing the relationship between factors.

This method will allow researchers to observe visitors to the Shah Alam food festival through exposure of identified practices as well as satisfaction of respondents of the sustainable event (Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A., 2020). The research paper will also analyse quantitatively, following Sield's survey on the same research method (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Individuals will complete surveys to share their ideas, sentiments, and experiences about sustainable food festival practices (Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B., 2022).

The research will also use existing study data to obtain research opinions from other researchers, in addition to generating the latest data through current research (Cooper & Schindler, 2021). Thus, the research design must be carefully assembled to ensure accurate and reliable outcomes (Kumar, 2020). To optimise research costs, the researchers will use a cross-sectional design (Bryman & Bell, 2020). The study samples will be selected from a predetermined population to represent the target population. Next, pilot testing will be conducted after the data collection (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

Population and sampling technique

Shah Alam, the state capital of Selangor and Malaysia's first planned city, covers an area of approximately 290.3 km² and had an estimated population of 438,745 as of 2023, according to city-level demographic data compiled from the Department of Statistics Malaysia. Given that the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table plateaus at a sample size of 384 for populations exceedingly roughly 100,000, this figure remains the appropriate target regardless of the exact population count, provided the underlying population estimate is accurately sourced.

Given the absence of a complete sampling frame for food festival attendees, this study will employ convenience sampling, consistent with prior food festival research using the same 18-and-above eligibility threshold (Hsu, Agyeiwaah, & Chen, 2021). Respondents will be approached on-site at the identified distribution points, and participation will be voluntary and self-selected via the online survey link.

This study employed convenience sampling, a non-probability method whereas the respondents are selected based on their convenience to the researcher usually due to geographic proximity, availability at the time of data collection, or willingness to contribute (Memon, Thurasamy, Ting, & Cheah, 2025). This form of sampling is quite common in the fields of business and management research specifically since it removes the need for a complete sampling frame, which food festival goers do not have there is no pre-existing list of everyone who will attend a given festival, making probability-based selection impractical.

According to Memon et al. (2025) note that the fundamental issues with convenience sampling's central limitation is representativeness because participation is self-selected rather than randomly assigned, the resulting sample may not fully reflect the broader population of interest, and statistical inferences drawn from it should be interpreted with appropriate caution. This is a limitation this study acknowledges rather than one this study is exempt from. At the same time, Memon et al. (2025) argue that convenience sampling, when selected deliberately and reported transparently, remains a defensible choice for time- and access-constrained research, particularly in field settings like festivals where attendees are physically present only for the event's duration and cannot be pre-recruited.

Table 1: Research Instrument

Part	Variable	Likert Scale	Author
Part A	Demographics	N/A	(Agyeiwaah & Zhao, 2024)
Part B (1)	Technology sustainable practices	1-5	(Hawkins & Lee, 2021)
Part B (2)	Social sustainable practices	1-5	(Brown & Khan, 2021)
Part B (3)	Environment sustainable practices	1-5	(Ossowska et.al, 2023)
Part C (1)	Attendees satisfaction with sustainable practices	1-5	(Rahman & Ismail, 2022)

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data gathering through Google Forms, data will then be analyzed via SPSS Statistics version 27, which involves demographic profiling, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis of variables. Before launching the survey on a large scale, the questionnaire will undergo a pilot test, which is essentially a small-scale testing process aimed at identifying any issues related to the clarity of items, design of the instrument, or data collection process itself prior to the full launch of the research (Bujang, Omar, Foo, & Hoon, 2024). The reliability of the instrument will be established using Cronbach's alpha, the traditional measure of reliability for multi-item Likert scale constructs, which will be performed separately for each construct, and where the closer value to 1 the better (Bujang et al., 2024).

This study used demographic, descriptive, and correlation analysis within SPSS to conduct a comprehensive examination of the dataset, enabling meaningful conclusions and actionable recommendations to be drawn from the research. Beyond descriptive profiling, this study employs Pearson correlation analysis to statistically test the relationships between each independent variable technology sustainability practices, social sustainability practices, and environmental sustainability practices and the dependent variable, attendee satisfaction with sustainable practices at food festivals. This approach follows the precedent set by Ismail, Nazari, and Zakaria (2025), who examined an almost identical structure at Penang's George Town Festival, using Pearson correlation to test three sustainability dimensions against participant satisfaction and finding that all three dimensions were significantly and positively correlated with satisfaction, with social sustainability emerging as the strongest predictor ($r = 0.68$, $p < .001$), followed by environmental ($r = 0.61$) and economic sustainability ($r = 0.54$).

Their findings support treating sustainability practices as genuine drivers of festival experience rather than peripheral operational concerns a premise this study extends to the Shah Alam context using technology, social, and environmental dimensions in place of the environmental-social-economic triad.

Guided by this framework, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Technology sustainability practices have a significant positive relationship with attendee satisfaction at food festivals in Shah Alam.

H2: Social sustainability practices have a significant positive relationship with attendee satisfaction at food festivals in Shah Alam.

H3: Environmental sustainability practices have a significant positive relationship with attendee satisfaction at food festivals in Shah Alam.

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) will be calculated for each IV-DV pair to determine both the strength and direction of these relationships, with significance evaluated at the $p < .05$ and $p < .01$ levels. A correlation matrix will be generated in SPSS to present all pairwise relationships simultaneously, allowing for comparison of which sustainability dimension exerts the strongest association with attendee satisfaction — consistent with the analytical approach used in comparable festival sustainability research (Ismail, Nazari, & Zakaria, 2025).

Demographic Analysis

A total of 408 respondents participated in the survey. Of that total, 56.1% were female and 43.9% were male. In terms of age, the largest group of respondents were aged 18–25 years old (41.9%), followed by those aged 26–35 years old (25.7%), 36–45 years old (14.7%), 46–55 years old (13.0%), and above 55 years old (4.7%).

Regarding education, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (53.9%), while 14.0% had a master's degree, 13.5% had a Diploma, 11.3% held a Doctorate's Degree, and 7.4% had other qualifications. In terms of ethnicity, the respondents comprised Chinese (23.8%), Malay (23.3%), Indian (20.1%), and other ethnic groups (32.8%).

When asked about their familiarity with sustainability practices, 36.0% of respondents answered familiar, 38.0% were somewhat familiar, 14.5% were not familiar at all and 11.5% very familiar. In terms of frequency of attending food festivals, 37.7% attended festivals 1–2 times a year, 26.0% attended 3–5 times a year, 22.3% were first-time attendees, and 14.0%

attended more than 5 times per year. The study findings reflect a diverse group of respondents in terms of gender, age, education, ethnicity, and familiarity with sustainability practices, with varying levels of participation in food festivals.

Table 2: Respondent Demographic

Demographic Information	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	229	56.1
	Male	179	43.9
	Total	408	100
Age	18 - 25 years old	171	41.9
	26 - 35 years old	105	25.7
	36 - 45 years old	60	14.7
	46 - 55 years old	53	13.0
	Above 55 years old	19	4.7
	Total	408	100.0
Education	Bachelor's Degree	220	53.9
	Diploma	55	13.5
	Doctorate's Degree	46	11.3
	Master's Degree	57	14.0
	Other	30	7.4
	Total	408	100.0
Ethnicity	Chinese	97	23.8
	Indian	82	20.1
	Malay	95	23.3
	Other	134	32.8
	Total	408	100.0
How familiar are you with sustainability practices?	Familiar	147	36.0
	Not familiar at all	59	14.5
	Somewhat familiar	155	38.0
	Very familiar	47	11.5
	Total	408	100.0
Frequency of Attending Food Festivals	1 – 2 times a year	154	37.7
	3 – 5 times a year	106	26.0
	First time	91	22.3
	More than 5 times a year	57	14.0
	Total	408	100.0

Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis is meant to quantify the internal consistency as well as the relationships between the items in a particular group. As much as this, the help of the SPSS software was incorporated in conducting this analysis and the assessment of such factors. The internal consistency of the items was tested with Cronbach's alpha, a well-known reliability coefficient.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was considered acceptable when it was more than 0.7 in this study. Here are the results of the reliability analysis of the 408 responses garnered in this survey.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Items	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Technology sustainable practices	5	.892
Social sustainable practices	5	.920
Environment sustainable practices	5	.915

The alpha coefficient for technology sustainability practices, consisting of five items, is 0.892, indicating a high level of reliability. Similarly, social sustainability practices, also with five items, achieve a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.920, reflecting excellent internal consistency. Lastly, environmental sustainability practices, with five items, report a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.915, which is also considered highly reliable. These results confirm that all variables meet the acceptable threshold for reliability

Hypotheses Testing

The research findings indicate that sustainable practices significantly influence attendee satisfaction levels at food festivals in Shah Alam.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Findings	P Value	Correlation	Results
H1: There is a significant relationship between sustainable technology adaptation practices at food festivals in Shah Alam on the level of satisfaction of the attendees.	$r=0.836$	$<.001$	High positive correlation	Supported
H2: There is a significant relationship between socially sustainable practices at food festivals in Shah Alam on the level of satisfaction of the attendees.	$r=0.902$	$<.001$	High positive correlation	Supported
H3: There is a significant relationship between environmental sustainability practices at food festivals in Shah Alam on the level of satisfaction of the attendees.	$r=0.873$	$<.001$	High positive correlation	Supported

Hypothesis 1 (H1) states that there is a significant relationship between sustainable technology adaptation practices and satisfaction at food festivals. This hypothesis is supported, with a correlation coefficient of $r=0.836$ ($p<.001$), indicating a high positive correlation. These results suggest that technological adaptation practices contribute to enhancing attendee satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposes a significant relationship between socially sustainable practices and attendee satisfaction. The findings show a very high positive correlation, with $r=0.902$

($p < .001$), supporting the hypothesis. Social sustainability practices are found to have the strongest relationship with satisfaction, highlighting their effectiveness in improving the overall experience for attendees.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) states that there is a significant relationship between environmental sustainability practices and attendee satisfaction. The results demonstrate a high positive correlation, with $r = 0.873$ ($p < .001$), confirming the hypothesis. Environmental practices are also shown to significantly contribute to attendee satisfaction levels.

In conclusion, all three types of sustainable practices technological, social, and environmental have a positive correlation with attendee satisfaction at food festivals in Shah Alam. Among these, social sustainability practices exhibit the highest degree of effectiveness, followed by environmental and technological adaptation practices. These findings emphasise the importance of socially sustainable practices as the core driver for improving attendee satisfaction.

Discussion

Sustainability practices and attendee satisfaction are crucial aspects of event management, particularly for food festivals in Shah Alam. Understanding how sustainable technology adaptation, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability influence attendee satisfaction can help event organisers improve their management experiences and ensure positive outcomes for participants.

Research findings demonstrate that sustainable practices contribute significantly to attendee satisfaction. This aligns with previous studies emphasising the role of sustainability in enhancing the perceived value and satisfaction levels of attendees. Ismail, Nazari, and Zakaria (2025), examining a comparable Malaysian cultural festival context, similarly found that all three sustainability dimensions they tested were significantly and positively correlated with participant satisfaction, reinforcing that sustainability functions as a genuine experiential driver rather than a peripheral operational concern. For instance, the positive relationships between sustainability practices and satisfaction (ranging from $r = 0.836$ to $r = 0.902$) highlight the importance of integrating technological, social, and environmental strategies into event planning and management.

Social sustainability practices emerged as the strongest predictor of attendee satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.902$. This finding underscores the importance of fostering community-oriented initiatives, promoting cultural values, and creating inclusive environments at food festivals. This is consistent with Ismail et al. (2025), who likewise found social sustainability to be the strongest predictor of satisfaction among their three tested dimensions, attributing this to cultural inclusivity and community engagement driving emotional and relational value for attendees. Events that focus on social sustainability are likely to enhance attendee perceptions of community engagement, creating a meaningful and memorable experience for participants. Events that focus on social sustainability are likely to enhance attendee perceptions of community engagement, creating a meaningful and memorable experience for participants.

Similarly, environmental sustainability practices showed a significant positive influence on satisfaction, with $r = 0.873$. Food festivals that emphasise waste reduction, recycling, and

environmental conservation can appeal to attendees' growing environmental consciousness. This aligns with global trends where environmentally responsible event management is becoming a standard expectation among participants. A pattern also confirmed by Ismail et al. (2025), who found visible environmental initiatives such as recycling infrastructure and energy-efficient operations meaningfully shaped attendees' perceptions of an event's environmental accountability.

In contrast, sustainable technology practices also exhibited a significant relationship with attendee satisfaction ($r=0.836$), albeit slightly lower than social and environmental factors. The implementation of digital solutions, such as e-ticketing systems, mobile applications, and efficient energy practices, enhances convenience and contributes to an improved overall experience. This is supported by Sjukriana, Hanafiah, Asyraff, and Kusumah (2025), whose systematic review of event technology adoption found that mobile apps and digital tools consistently improved attendee experience through immersive engagement and real-time logistics support, while adoption itself depended on perceived ease of use and benefit — helping explain why technology's satisfaction impact, while significant, may register somewhat lower than more emotionally resonant social or environmental initiatives.

Event organisers can leverage these technological advancements to streamline operations and reduce their environmental footprint. These findings collectively highlight the interconnected nature of sustainability and satisfaction in event management. Event organisers must prioritise social, environmental, and technological sustainability practices to create positive experiences for attendees. This study provides evidence that sustainable practices are not only beneficial for environmental and community well-being but also serve as key drivers of attendee satisfaction.

Despite these significant findings, there are opportunities for further improvement. Future studies could explore additional factors such as economic sustainability or cultural heritage promotion to enhance the understanding of attendee satisfaction a gap Ismail et al. (2025) also identify, noting that economic sustainability initiatives in their own study showed comparatively weaker influence on satisfaction, potentially due to lower visibility or unclear communication of economic benefits to attendees. Moreover, event organisers should actively engage with attendees through marketing strategies that highlight sustainability efforts, as this can create a stronger positive perception and increase satisfaction levels. By addressing these aspects, food festivals in Shah Alam can continue to evolve as exemplary models of sustainable event management, meeting the needs and expectations of attendees while fostering long-term positive impacts on the environment and community.

While conducting this research, certain difficulties emerged, though all were manageable. Limited existing literature specifically addresses sustainability practices and attendee satisfaction at food festivals in Shah Alam, requiring considerable effort to compile relevant data from adjacent contexts. The study was also constrained by a tight three-to-four-week data collection window, which limited the depth and breadth of outreach possible within the research timeline.

Gathering sufficient responses took longer than anticipated, as not all festival attendees were willing to participate. Some were hesitant, potentially due to concerns about scams or privacy a reluctance also observed in comparable festival research, where online questionnaires distributed at events have been found to yield lower response rates among certain attendee

groups, even when survey access is made as convenient as possible (Lorincz, Formadi, & Ernszt, 2023). Timing compounded this challenge: data collection coincided with peak festival activity, when attendees were focused on enjoying the event rather than completing surveys, echoing the on-site survey fatigue documented in prior festival-based studies that relied on in-person questionnaire distribution during live events (Lorincz, Formadi, & Ernszt, 2023).

Accessibility of certain events posed a further constraint, as not all food festivals in Shah Alam were open to on-site survey administration, narrowing the pool of respondents and potentially affecting sample diversity. Despite these challenges, the study adapted by combining online distribution with visits to multiple festival locations, helping ensure the data collected remained as comprehensive and representative as circumstances allowed.

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that future studies in the field of environmental sustainability at food festivals focus on increasing engagement with attendees by clearly explaining the purpose of the survey. This can help participants understand the significance of their responses and encourage higher participation rates. Moreover, researchers should consider expanding their data collection efforts beyond the Shah Alam region to ensure a more diverse sample. This recommendation is reinforced by Folgado-Fernández, Huete-Alcocer, Hernández-Rojas, and Vileikis (2025), who note that convenience sampling conducted at a single destination — even when it yields a large sample — can limit generalizability and introduce non-response or social desirability bias, since respondents are drawn from one location's specific visitor profile rather than a broader cross-section of festival attendees. Extending data collection across multiple Malaysian cities or festival types would provide a broader perspective on the relationship between sustainability practices and attendee satisfaction and would help establish whether the patterns found in Shah Alam hold more generally or are specific to that city's demographic and cultural context.

It is also important to pay attention to the timing and accessibility of the surveys. To improve data collection, future researchers may consider distributing the surveys through both on-site and online platforms, making it more convenient for attendees to participate at their own pace, rather than at the single, time-constrained moment of peak festival activity when attention is elsewhere. Furthermore, researchers should ensure that survey questions are clear, unbiased, and tailored to the specific audience of food festival attendees, as poorly worded or generic sustainability items risk producing responses that reflect confusion rather than genuine attitudes.

Lastly, improving the sampling strategy and defining the target population more precisely will help strengthen the research. Focusing on specific attendee demographics such as age, interests, and prior sustainability awareness could provide deeper insight into the factors influencing satisfaction with sustainable practices at food festivals, an approach consistent with de Bruyn, Ben Said, Meyer, and Soliman's (2023) broader observation that the tourism sustainability field continues to benefit from more granular, segment-specific research as the discipline matures beyond general destination-level analysis. By implementing these suggestions, future research can build upon the current study's findings and contribute to a more precise, generalizable understanding of sustainability practices in the context of food festivals.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between sustainability practices—namely technological, social, and environmental—and attendee satisfaction at food festivals in Shah Alam. The findings reveal that all three sustainability practices significantly influence attendee satisfaction, with social sustainability practices showing the highest positive correlation, followed by environmental and technological practices. These results highlight the importance of integrating comprehensive sustainability strategies in event management to enhance attendee experiences and perceptions. The positive outcomes underscore the growing importance of sustainable event practices in fostering satisfaction and creating value for attendees. Social sustainability practices emerge as a key driver of satisfaction, emphasising the need for community engagement and inclusivity at events. Environmental and technological initiatives, such as waste management, energy efficiency, and digital innovations, further enhance convenience and align with attendee expectations for sustainable event management.

For event organisers, these findings provide actionable insights into the critical role of sustainability in driving attendee satisfaction. By prioritising and improving sustainability efforts, food festivals can deliver meaningful experiences that not only meet attendee expectations but also contribute to broader environmental and social goals.

Future research could expand on these findings by exploring additional dimensions of sustainability, such as economic or cultural factors, and their impact on attendee satisfaction. Additionally, examining diverse event settings and incorporating longitudinal studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability's role in event management. In conclusion, this research highlights the need for food festivals in Shah Alam to continue fostering sustainability practices. By doing so, event organisers can enhance attendee satisfaction, promote sustainable values, and set a benchmark for successful, eco-conscious event management in the future.

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