

Interactive Technologies are driving Meetings and Events industry

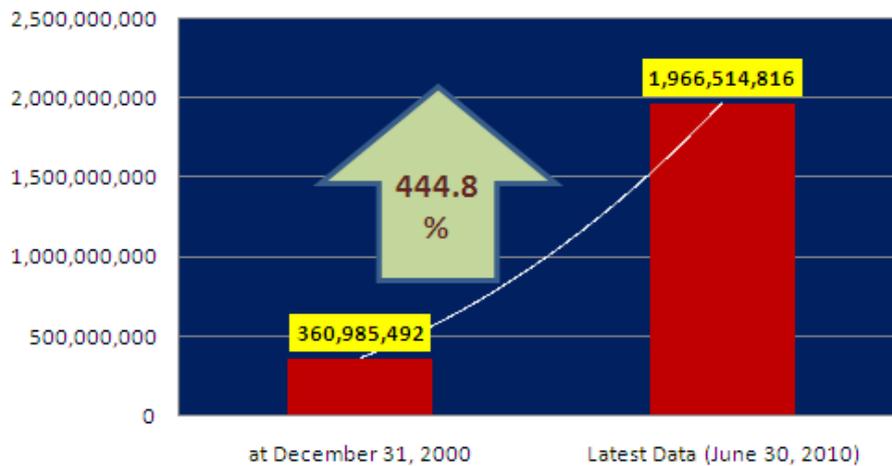
Global economic recovery continues. According to the October 2010 World Economic Outlook from the International Monetary Fund, global economic output will grow 4.2% in 2011, compared with expected final growth of 4.8% for 2010. The World Bank reported that emerging nations will account for a larger portion of the global economy than developed countries by 2015 as middle-class populations from Southeast Asia and Latin America expand, and public and private investment grow. International Monetary Fund Chief Economist Olivier Blanchard predicted a positive but low growth in advanced countries whilst developing nations will expand at a **“very high”** rate. The East Asia and Pacific region is leading the economic recovery with a focus on the need to make progress with economic integration and climate change, whilst Latin America is reported to be entering a path of fast and sustained development. South Asia will place priority on reducing fiscal deficits and control debt accretion whereas sub-Saharan Africa is to focus on infrastructure improvement and job creation. The Middle East and North Africa, on the other hand, is reported to need to generate more opportunities for the new generation to become private entrepreneurs and for women to fully join economic life.

Given the recovering world economy, the business conditions for the meetings and events industry is improving for the year 2010 and onwards. Some of the indicative information includes the following:

- Positive outlook for 2011 with the number of meetings, events or incentives, as well as budgets, expected to rise. (*IMEX Global Insights report released in November 2010. The results came from a survey of 45 senior meetings industry and corporate professionals on their views towards the future.*)
- Resilience remains a defining feature of the meetings sector with many associations, when asked, denying that the economic downturn had had a crucial negative impact on their associations during the past year. (*The Association Meetings Forecasts and Trends Report 2011 released in October 2010, an annual research survey conducted jointly by IMEX in Frankfurt and ICCA*)
- The meeting industry is continuing its recovery at a steady pace with the majority of the respondents feeling positive and foreseeing improved business conditions compared to year 2010 (*MPI Business Barometers*)
- The supply of corporate meetings facilities and services will not override the demand in 2011 as was the case in 2010, the opposite of the usual trend for lower rates and short-notice reservations (*Advito 2011 Industry Forecast 2011*)
- A favorable outlook for the incentive travel market. The incentive business is predicted to be better in 2011 (68% of respondents) and in 2012 (77% of respondents). (*The Pulse Survey. The survey asked 130 survey participants—including incentive providers, corporate incentive travel buyers, incentive suppliers, and others—from September 13 through September 30, 2010 on trends related to travel programs, merchandise non-cash programs, budgets for 2011, and other issues of interest to the industry.*)
- A trend for increased opportunities for the trade show industry to transform large shows into smaller, shorter shows customized to targeted audiences with more regional and local offerings and more interaction with the incorporation of social media to create personalized experiences for delegates and exhibitors, enhancing ROI for all stakeholders. (*MPI 2010 Article on interviewing Chris Valentine, a founder of T3 Expo (t3expo.com), and Rohit Talwar, noted futurist and CEO of Fast Future CEO (fastfuture.com).*)

Findings across the meetings and events segments worldwide reveal that a trend to watch for the year 2011 is the utilization and application of technology to the industry. In support of this realization, number of World Internet users is reported to have increased over the past decade (Year 2000-2010) by 444.80%, or by over a billion people (1,605,529,324 people to be exact).

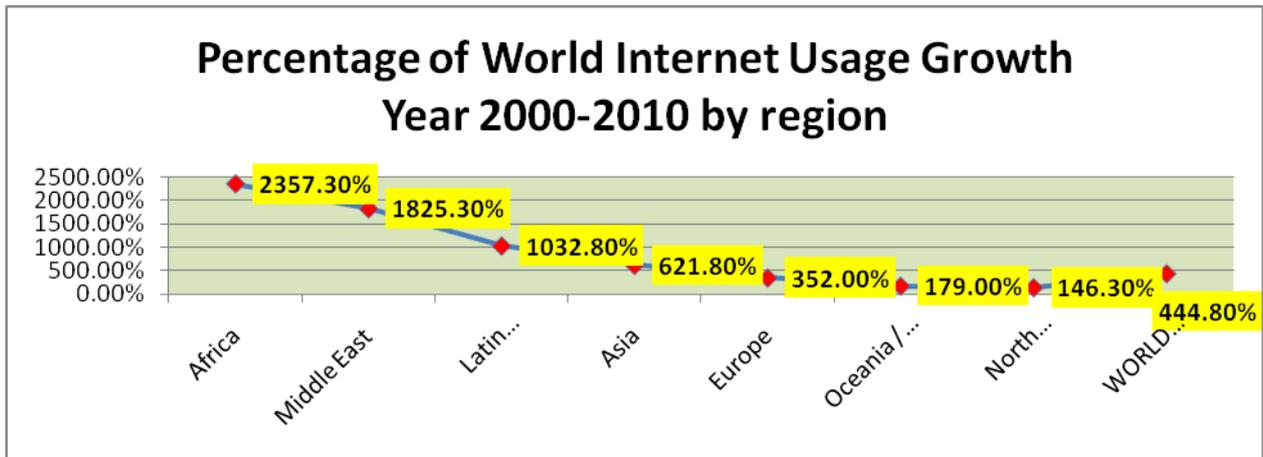
A Growth of World Total Internet Users



Source of data: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

Internet Usage and World Population Statistics are for June 30, 2010. Demographic (Population) numbers are based on data from the US Census Bureau. Internet usage information comes from data published by Nielsen Online, by the International Telecommunications Union, by GfK, local Regulators and other reliable sources. Information credit is given to www.internetworldstats.com. Copyright © 2000 - 2010, Miniwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved worldwide.

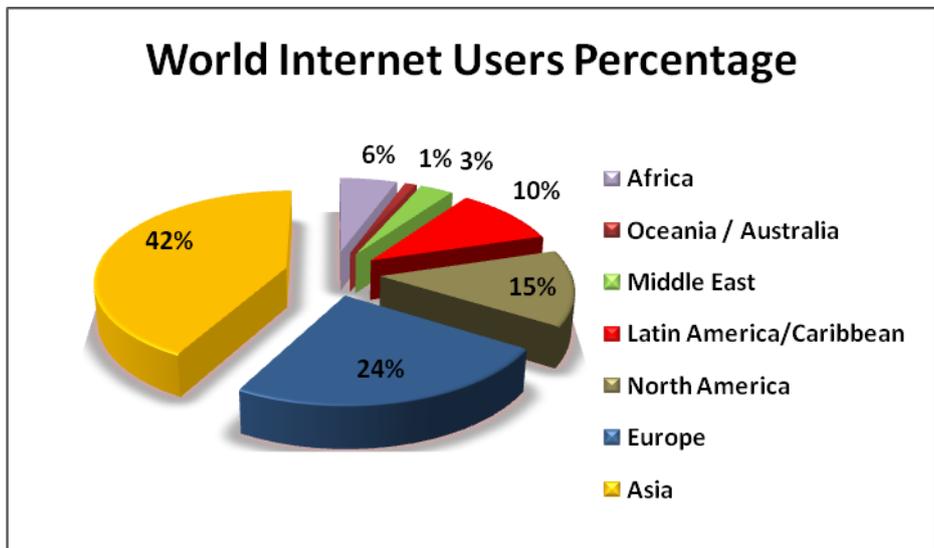
In fact, the percentage of Internet usage growth has exceeded 100% across all regions, even in the more experienced usage regions like North America. Africa is reported to be the highest Internet usage growing region, having reached more than 2,000% growth, followed by the Middle East, Latin America/Caribbean, Asia, Europe, Oceania and Australasia and North America.



Source of data: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

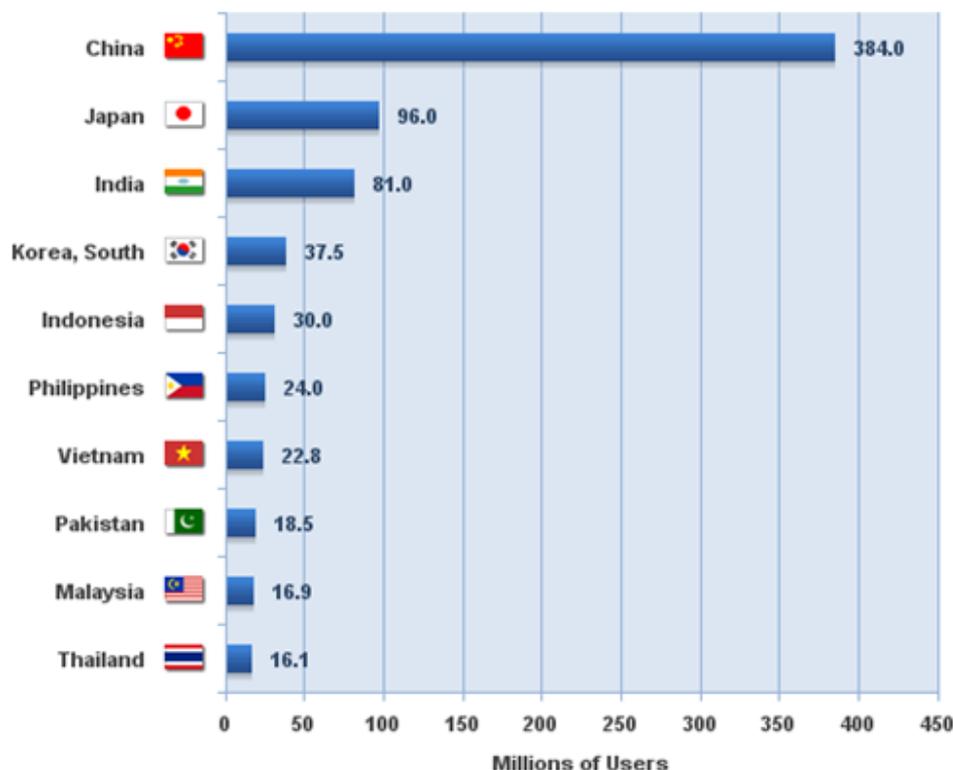
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Accounting for 56% of the world population and ranked as the region with the 4th highest growing internet usage rate, Asia has the highest percentage of Internet users at 42.4% - or almost half of the world's Internet users - followed by Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa, Middle East and Oceania/Australia.



Within the region with the highest number of Internet users, China is ranked, the nation with highest number of Internet users in 2009. Japan, India, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Pakistan, Malaysia and Thailand follow in the top ten.

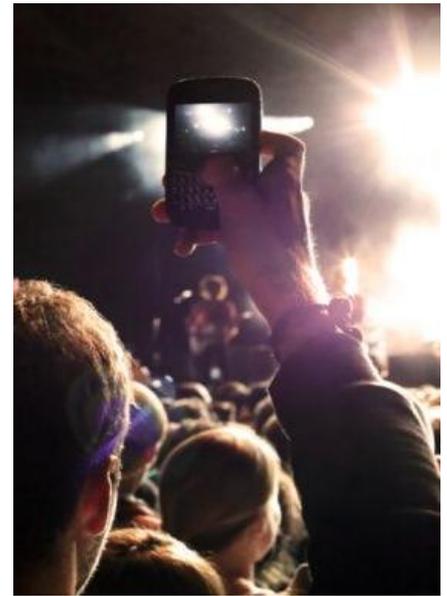
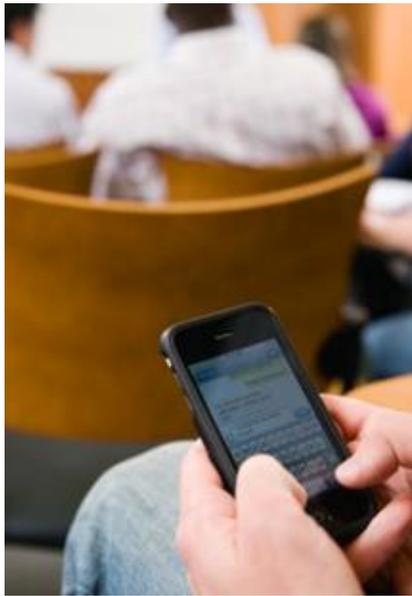
Internet in Asia - 2009 Top 10 Countries



Source of data: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

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The internet usage statistics support the fact that technology is progressively being used in, not only Asia but in Europe and the Americas as well. With regards to its implications for the meetings and events industry, the following shared common observations that technology, particularly social media and mobile applications, are the integral part of the future of the meetings and events industry:



- The Asian Travel industry considers social media a key branding and marketing tool. A recent survey revealed that **an investment in social media will grow** as a result. 98% of travel industry respondents to **an online ITB Asia survey indicated that they are likely to increase or at least maintain their social media spending in 2011**. Some 56% of the 212 travel industry respondents said that they would increase their investment in social media while 42% said they would maintain budget levels. In fact, despite the commitment to social media investment, the respondents expected to allocate less than 5% of their total marketing budget to social media. The top reasons to use social media are to enhance the brand name, create financial returns and boost marketing campaigns.
- An evaluation by Rob Davidson, EIBTM Industry analyst, in EIBTM 2010 Industry Trends & Market Share Report revealed that planners are expecting that hotels or conference venues will have meeting technology installed and that they can provide high connectivity to support online content and applications during the event. **The use of social media by venues and Convention Bureaus as part of their marketing strategies** to appeal younger generation of meetings planners and delegates, destinations and venues are increasing. The use of blogs, Twitter and Facebook, LinkedIn and Trip Advisor is reported to be growing as planners seek information and customers' feedback on their properties.
- The statistics from the post-show survey of hosted buyers who attended IMEX, the worldwide exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events in Frankfurt in May 2010, revealed that **625 respondents were using social networking sites for both networking and as meetings and event management tools** with LinkedIn coming out on top (64%), followed by Facebook (60%), Twitter (27%) and YouTube (23%). The survey also revealed that 57% of respondents said they used smart phone with BlackBerry having the most users (47%), followed by Apple iPhones (31%) and Nokia devices (24%).
- In the US, interactive technology and sustainability are reported to be amongst the top drivers of meetings and events according to findings released on 2011 meeting trends by Orlando-based meetings management firm Publics Meetings USA (PMUSA). **Technology is expected to be at the**

core of several trends in the meeting industry in 2011 e.g. customizable **Mobile Applications** as event organizers communicate with attendees before and during the meeting. PMUSA expects customization-lead generation and comprehensive registration tracking and reporting to become more prevalent through **the use of barcode scanning and RFID**. In addition, PMUSA forecasts continued growth in **the use of social networks** like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to market meetings and events, communicate with meeting attendees and connect planners and clients during the meeting planning process.

- Sharing by Paul Ouimet, an Executive Vice President of Inter Vistas Consulting at the recent ICCA 49th Congress in Hyderabad India during October 2010, was that with the increasing usage of the Internet worldwide, traditional media as a communicative tool is seen to be moving more towards social media, signifying a movement of communication from monologue to dialogue. This evolving pattern has a significant implication for the meetings and events industry. Research by ICCA Intelligence Volume 30-April 2010 revealed that **people communicate more interactively using on-site internet access, social media, podcasts, blogs, video distribution channels such as Youtube, Twitter and other mobile applications** to name a few.
- A discussion at the EIBTM annual CEO Summit which took place in December 2009 in Barcelona, where more than 60 members of the global meeting industry attended, revealed that **social media is at the top of agenda**. It was agreed at the Summit that social media has created a revolution in how people in the industry communicate with each other. In addition to the need to embrace a new language and style of writing to communicate effectively with the younger generation who demand information quickly and concisely, organisations need to ensure that social media becomes an integral part of any corporation's business model.
- A view of IMEX (the Worldwide Exhibition for Incentive Travel, Meetings and Events) Group CEO Carina Bauer said that, "Current trends suggest that **mobile payment systems, environmental monitoring and even intelligent sensors embedded into mobiles are all just around the corner and these will have huge implications for the meetings and events industry.**" She added, "The growth of **social media** in different world markets creates both enormous pressures and provide **international businesses** such as ours with fantastic opportunities. The discipline for all of us is to pay careful attention to where the value truly lies for each of our different audiences and never to assume that a one size solution fits all."
- Chris Valentine, the founder of T3Expo, believes that it is smaller organisations that make up the majority of exhibitors at most trade shows. **Tradeshow organizers should pay more attention to feedback from social networking and analyse the data for audience identification with more specific approaches.** As pointed out by Rohit Talwar CEO of Fast Future, "Exhibitors must make full use of **social networks** to target key attendees and book appointments with them." More to be seen is investment in pre-selecting and screening buyers, scheduling appointments, using technologies such as RFID to report real data on who is at the show, the stand they are visiting, time spent etc. In other words, **organizers will start to leverage social media technologies to get better feedback about their events.**

Indeed, the real value is in how the technology is and will be used in more intimate and conversational settings with the increasing number of technological savvy people and technology usage. For example, using the iPhone application **'Flight Status'** lets one checks the status of flights across 1,200 Airlines flying between 4,250 airports worldwide. It is also the only application that provides flights, airports and airlines information together, making essential travelling information available at users' fingertips. iTrade Show is another application that let one find worldwide tradeshow and event planning resources for upcoming corporate events, meetings, conferences, trade shows and conventions, with more than 150 planning categories to choose from in addition to information about sourcing ability, from venues to promotional products, and trade show displays to Booth attractions.



Illustration source: http://www.conventions.net/trade_show_iphone_apps

The following meetings technologies exemplify how the meetings and events industry could increase its value through the application:

Meetings Technology	Description/ Explanation	Sample sites/applications
Wiki	An interactive website considered a helpful project management tool.	www.wikipedia.org
	One Wiki application with a direct use for meeting professionals, providing online free word processing and spreadsheets. The creator can invite others to view or edit the document and any changes to the document will be seen by those sharing the documents immediately.	http://docs.google.com
Blogs	Online journals written by an individual or a group can be useful for promoting meetings. Many meeting industry associations such as PCMA, MPI and ASAE have set up blogs channels around their events to create interest and get feedback, as well as build up a community.	http://meetings-industry.blogspot.com/ http://blog.meetingsnet.com/face2face/ http://www.meetpie.com/Modules/EditorsBlog/EditorsBlog.aspx http://www.conferencecenterblog.com
Podcasts	On-demand radio/video “talk shows” accessible via computer and downloadable to iPod or MP3 player, Podcasts are cost-effective and can be distributed via iTunes, other podcast distributor or your own website. When done properly, podcasts can bring traffic to the website, generate business and attract attendance to meetings.	http://podcast.com/
Video distribution channels	Video distribution sites where one can upload video free with a large number of them available for anyone to see. Meeting planners can use these free video distribution channels to promote meetings. Events can be promoted in an exciting and engaging way at a small portion of the cost of traditional media.	www.youtube.com www.Flickr.com www.Viddler.com www.Blip.TV http://video.yahoo.com

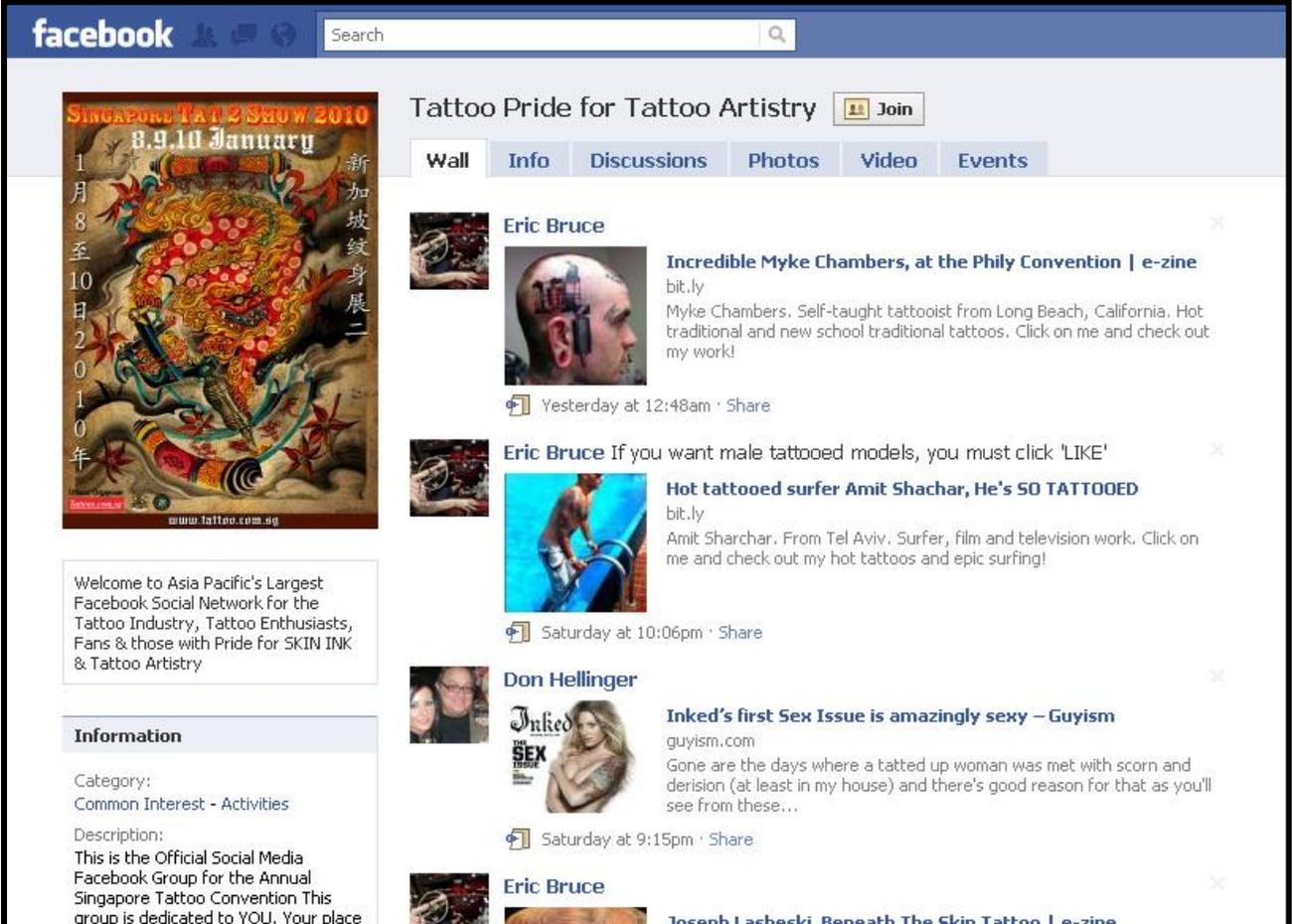
Meetings Technology	Description/ Explanation	Sample sites/applications
Social sites	Sites to connect people for social and business purposes. These sites are new ways for meeting professionals to create a community and generate excitement around the events as they make pages on these sites to connect and share their experiences or manage multiple accounts for effectively.	www.facebook.com www.linkedin.com www.plaxo.com www.pathable.com www.crowdvine.com www.intronetworks.com www.hootsuite.com
Twitter	An open application where users send posts (known as “tweets”) or short messages of 140 characters or less, and people can choose to follow anyone on Twitter. This means when tweets are posted, users will see the postings of those they are following when they use the application. Twitter is mainly a mobile application that carries indicative trends for the meeting industry as people tweet at meetings about their impressions and use it to connect with people with the same interests.	http://twitter.com
User generated review sites	These self explanatory sites are reported to be potentially important tools for meeting planners when making purchasing decisions.	www.tripadvisor.com www.yelp.com www.meetinguniverse.com www.meetingsintel.com http://meetingscollaborative.com www.elitemeetings.com
Mobile application	As smart phones are increasingly being used, hundreds of mobile applications are being made available for the benefit of meeting planners, attendees and exhibitors for networking, lead exchange, electronic ticketing, way finding, audience polling, surveys, pocket programs, course notes/literature collection, meetings logistics, membership management, micro payments, personal agenda building and sharing, exhibit guide/floor plan (interactive), exhibit literature, exhibitor	www.meetingapps.com www.spotme.com www.visiontree.com www.core-apps.net www.runtriz.com www.eventmediaconcepts.com www.bcard.net www.bartizan.com www.busyevent.com www.face2name.com www.polleverywhere.com www.zukuweb.com

Meetings Technology	Description/ Explanation	Sample sites/applications
	management etc.	www.validar.com www.gowalla.com www.foursquare.com www.sipity.com http://bit.ly/bEQuqu www.quickmobile.com www.snipp.com www.conventions.net
iPad and tablet PCs	Touch-sensitive, tablet-like computers in a wide range of formats is highly portable, with easy input tools that is seen as natural for use during meetings e.g. for interactive displays at booths, for meeting planners to access specific data, for attendees to view streaming event video etc.	www.quickmobile.com www.ootoweb.com
HD Video for hybrid meetings	HD leads the way to hybrid meetings and speakers presenting remotely at events with Skype's newest 5.0 beta version providing 760p high definition video at no charge, as well as the ability for four simultaneous callers.	http://bit.ly/QV7n7
Speaker and content management systems	A program set up to combine historically separate tasks with lots of required data management under a unified system that increases the efficiency of large, multi-session events.	www.omnipress.com www.cmcgc.com www.owpm.com
Strategic meetings management and ROI measurement program	A development of web-based SMMP tools with a range of pricing models aimed at providing better meeting procurement tools at lower costs to a wider range of corporations and associations.	www.certain.com www.cvent.com www.signup4.com http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Sigma www.meetingmetrix.com

Interestingly, three cases have proven that social media is a cost-effective, viable and effective medium that boosts efficiency of meeting attendance. These examples are:

1) The 1st Annual Singapore Tattoo show

Case Study One: How A Facebook Group Drove 15,000 People To An Event

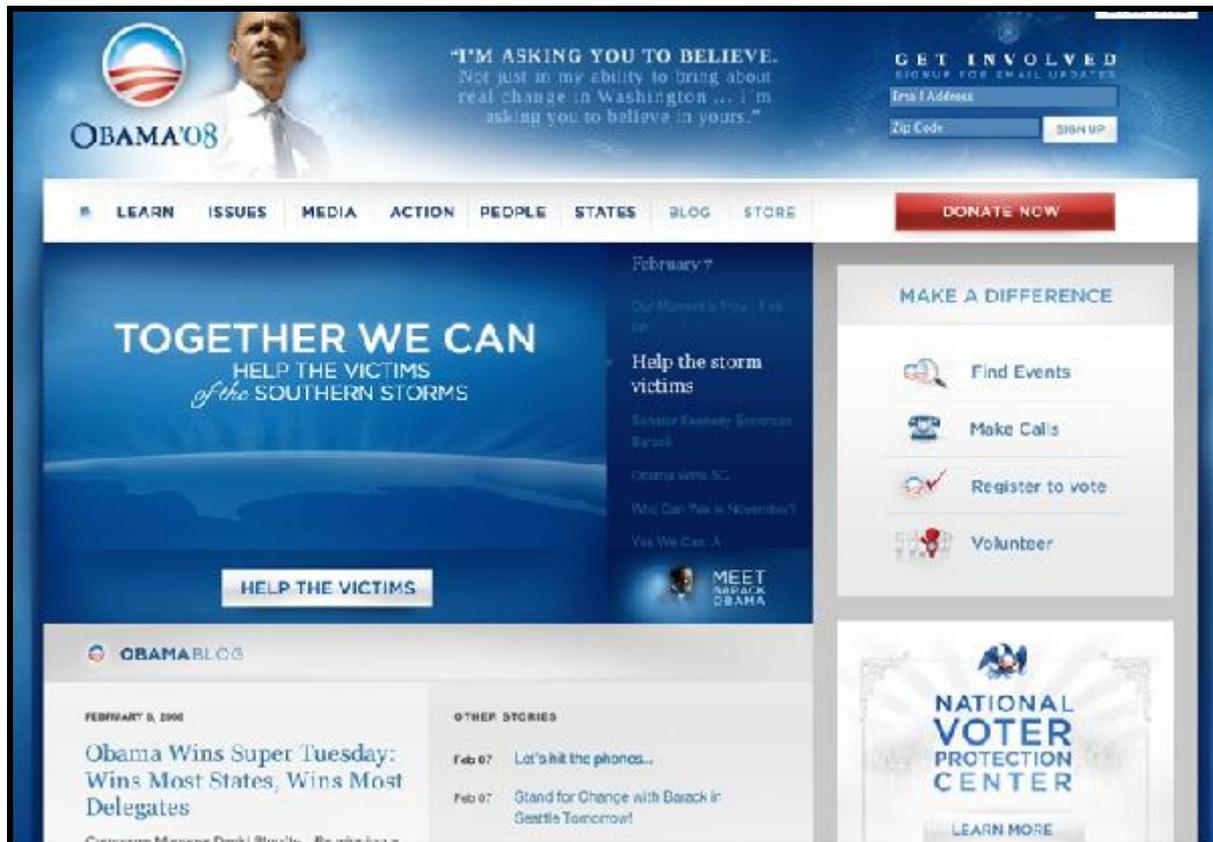


The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the group 'Tattoo Pride for Tattoo Artistry'. On the left, there is a large poster for the 'Singapore Tattoo Show 2010' held from January 8-10, 2010. The poster features a colorful dragon and the text '新加坡纹身展二' (Singapore Tattoo Show II). Below the poster is a welcome message: 'Welcome to Asia Pacific's Largest Facebook Social Network for the Tattoo Industry, Tattoo Enthusiasts, Fans & those with Pride for SKIN INK & Tattoo Artistry'. The main content area shows a 'Wall' with several posts. The first post is by Eric Bruce, titled 'Incredible Myke Chambers, at the Philly Convention | e-zine', with a link to bit.ly. The second post is also by Eric Bruce, saying 'If you want male tattooed models, you must click 'LIKE'', with a link to 'Hot tattooed surfer Amit Shchar, He's SO TATTOOED'. The third post is by Don Hellinger, titled 'Inked's first Sex Issue is amazingly sexy - Guyism', with a link to guyism.com. The fourth post is by Eric Bruce, titled 'Joseph Lasheski, Beneath The Skin Tattoo | e-zine'.

The 1st Annual Singapore Tattoo Show was held on January 9-11, 2009 with the aim of attracting 5,000 visitors to the show with more than 120 artists from around the world representing various modern tattoo styles along with their machines. As a new marketing tool for conferences and events, a Facebook group called Tattoo Artistry was created three months prior to the event as a way to connect people and aimed to bring together more than 3,000 people at this **'virtual event'**. Instead of relying on buying expensive traditional advertising, the online community gathered together people who were eager to attend the live event. This resulted in 15,000 or three times the number of people expected, attending the show. It is worth noting that this social medium works well when the target market is made up of Facebook users or people of generation I, those who have had and used the Internet as part of their daily lives, specifically those in their 20s.

2) Barack Obama Presidential Campaign web

Case Study Two: A Presidential Event

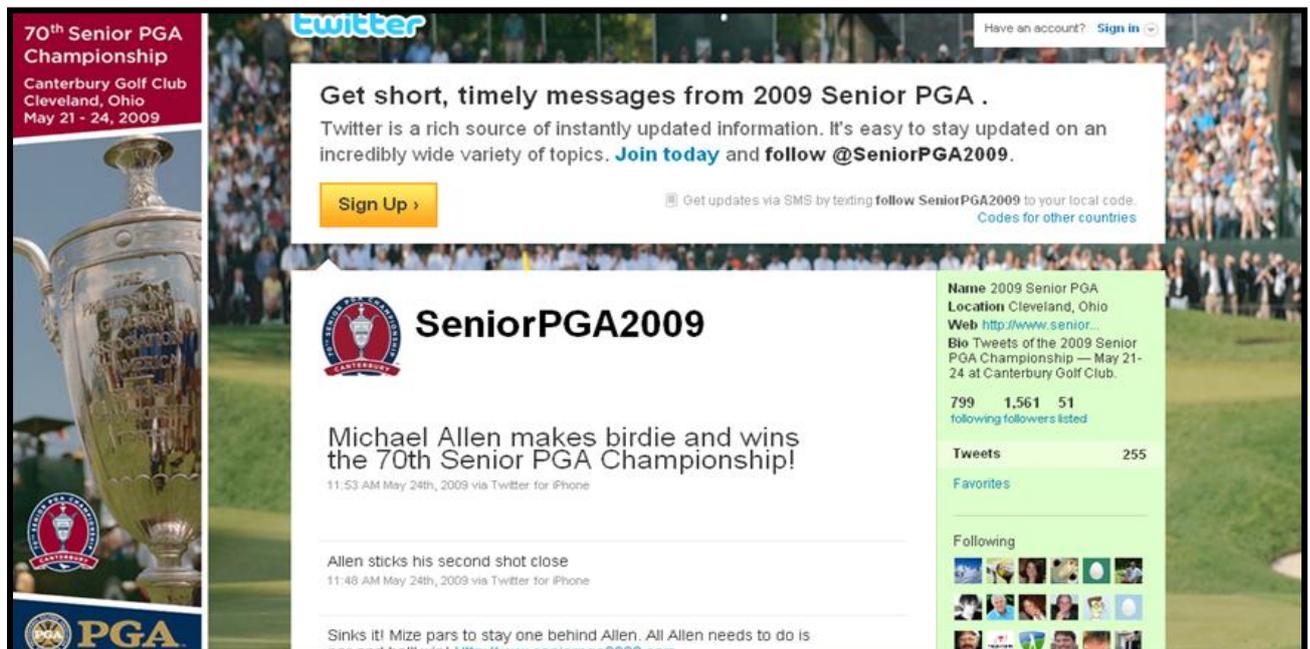


The Senator Barack Obama's campaign website is arguably the most effective online social media campaign event to date. The following numbers exemplify how the site has been flooded with interests:

- Over 3 million individual donors were mobilized through social media
- More than 200,000 offline events were created and promoted nationwide
- A total of 6.5 million on-line donations
- More than 13 million people provided their email addresses to the site, helping sent more than 7,000 types of messages
- More than 2 billion e-mails arrived in inboxes
- More than 400,000 blog entries were generated
- People spent more than 14 million hours watching over 1,000 Obama campaign YouTube Videos
- More than 50 million viewings of the campaign videos on YouTube.

3) The 2009 Senior PGA Championship-Cleveland, USA

Case Study Three: The 2009 Senior PGA Championship – Cleveland, USA



Three months and sixteen days before the event, the following social media were used to support the event marketing plan, generating awareness and building excitement by giving the golf fans a behind-the-scenes look at the **2009 Senior PGA Championship in Cleveland, USA**.

- **Twitter** — [@SeniorPGA2009](https://twitter.com/SeniorPGA2009)
- **Blog** — www.SeniorPGA2009.WordPress.com
- **Flickr** — www.flickr.com/photos/seniorpga2009
(Flickr was used for only part of the campaign, as event photos were eventually posted to the event Website. Most Twitter pictures were added to their yfrog account.)

The observations on the success of using social media to the benefit of the meetings and events industry revealed that it is important to take an integrative approach (e.g. using the Twitter together with the blog etc.), link the blog to the event website in order to generate credibility from the search engine's view point thereby ranking the site higher because of a number of key words, using organic approach (e.g. *twittergrader.com* or *search.twitter.com*) to build followers, measure the following numbers and their views possibly by posting images that cannot be seen from other media, tweeting asking their opinions, assign post-event responsibility to added personnel for increasing sections that requires responses and monitoring, launch the campaign early in order to develop strategy, generate followers and build relationship with the target group, and, finally and perhaps most importantly, be creative!

Given the increasing use and implications of interactive technology to the meetings and events industry, it is probably best summed up by the balancing fact that technology can replace small meetings but cannot do the same to meetings with a large number of participants nor those that create a long term relationships,

which requires face-to-face interaction. As said by Martin Sirk, CEO of ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association), *“Many companies have now invested in high-tech conference rooms and good broadband connectivity, and inevitably this type of technology is going to replace small, routine meetings. However, once you get above 40-50 participants, it becomes far less efficient to do that. It’s also important to build a long-term relationship, and you can’t do that in the beginning through technology-that has to be done face-to-face.”* He went on to explain that the use of cutting-edge technology has led to hybrid meetings that utilize web conferences and live streaming in order to reach a greater numbers of participants. This view is supported by Didier Scaillet, Chief Development Officer of MPI, who believes that technology will never completely replace live meetings. He also feels that there is a great potential for hybrid meetings.

The part that interactive technology plays and will play in the meetings and events industry has been an evident and undeniable trend that needs to be closely monitored. It is not merely being aware and having the know-how to use the newly developed technological applications but also choosing and applying these available applications to increase the efficiency and cost effectiveness of results. The biggest challenge is getting the right combination of technology and traditional meetings in these **‘hybrid’** meetings.

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