

# Case Study

## Technology vs Waste - Tech in Asia Singapore 2017

Tech In Asia 2017  
Suntec Convention Centre  
May 2017

The terms startups and technology are almost synonymous these days, with the majority of startups utilising technology in one form or the other. Singapore being a hub for startups, hosts Tech in Asia Singapore every year, and 2017 was the 6<sup>th</sup> edition.

“Our conferences bring together entrepreneurs, investors, medias, corporations, developers and students to learn about the startup community.”  
Tech in Asia

Tech in Asia Singapore 2017 was held at Suntec Convention centre in May 2017. According to Tech in Asia Facebook page, an estimated 5000 tech enthusiasts comprised of startups, venture capitalists, investors were expected to be present.

**“A vegan diet is probably the single biggest way to reduce your impact on planet Earth, not just greenhouse gases, but global acidification, eutrophication, land use and water use,” Joseph Poore, University of Oxford, UK**



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Tech In Asia 2017 *Moving on to Sustainability.....*

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**Registration** – Registration was completely online and paper-free (not surprising for a tech conference).

**Name Badge & Lanyard** – These were not collected back at the end of the event. With approximately 5000 people attending, the plastic waste would have been considerable.

“Given that TiA is an annual event, organisers could collect back name badges and re-use them the following year. This is increasingly being practiced by events that are consciously lowering their carbon footprint.”

**Goodie Bags** – Goodies Bags were provided for attendees who paid a higher fee.

“Often goodie bags and its contents, end up being disposed of at the event itself or sometime down the road. By doing away with it, we help cut back on wasted resources. Alternatively, if conferences feel the need to provide them, participants should be given the choice at registration to opt-in or out of receiving a goodie bag. “ Read more X-HEBIT suggestions here XXX....

**Programme Schedule** – Despite having an event app, which was accessible via the free wifi provided by Suntec, flyers with the event programmes were printed and circulated widely. Two sets of flyers were printed, one for each day of the event. Many were found left lying around throughout the venue.

“One of the advantages of having an event app is that paper waste resulting from printing event programmes can be done away with (or significantly reduced). Strategically placing boards listing the event programme throughout the venue, is also a way to help participants refer to the programme, and it cuts back on printed programmes. This is increasingly practiced in events, with BEX Asia being one such example.



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*An excess of flyers and brochures were being circulated by many startups. These were often found discarded in various areas within the venue. Name badges were not collected back – a simple option to reduce plastic waste is to re-use name badges for annual events.*



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**Flyers** – There were approximately a 100 startup booths, and the vast majority were giving out flyers. Upon enquiring with a few if their flyers were printed using Forest Stewardship (FSC) certified or post-consumer recycled paper, I was give blank looks.

“While events do inevitably use resources, these can be reduced if proper guidelines are stipulated by the organisers/hosts. One example is to encourage exhibitors to reduce printed material for distribution, wherever possible. Where there is a necessity to distribute paper flyers, it should be stipulated by the organiser that sustainably procured paper, which is available in Singapore, be used. Event management solutions such as Actigage by GEVME and Cvent Lead Gatherer allow attendees to either receive information from exhibitors (former) or exchange contact info (latter), thus reducing paper waste.”

**Plastic Waste** – Throughout the 2-day event, single use bottled water was provided for attendees. This was replenished regularly throughout day, so there never really was a shortage of water. Great for thirsty folks, bad for environment.

In addition, folks who had their own water bottle, such as myself, had no option to refill their bottles as there were no water dispensers on site.... The provision of several water dispensers would have helped reduce plastic bottle consumption by those who had their own re-usable bottles.



*Single Use Plastic Bottled water was provided throughout the event for attendees. However, no recycling bins were provided on site to collect the plastic – a wasted opportunity.*



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### Learning Point

“Bringing re-usable water bottles should be encouraged by organisers with provisions made to provide water dispensers. This would help reduce the amount of plastic consumed. While plastic bottles can be recycled, our first option should always be to reduce the amount of waste created, followed by recycling.”

To Conclude.....

Currently, technology is used primarily as a tool to improve user experience. However, with proper planning, technology can also be exploited as a tool to reduce event environmental footprint. For instance, event apps such as Eventbrite, reduce the need for paper print outs.

We often cite technology as the future to mediating environmental impacts by reducing resource use and waste. An example would be Carousel marketplace, which encourages a circular economy by selling stuff we don't want to someone who has use for it. Likewise, startups focusing on smart logistics have the potential to improve fuel efficiencies. Therefore, technology focused events are a fantastic platform to highlight how startups are leveraging technology, not just to disrupt, but also to reduce environmental impacts.

