

Digital Performance in Event Leadership Management: Assessing the Five Phases in Metro Manila's New Normal

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Abstract. This study examined self-reported digital practices among event management practitioners in Metro Manila, Philippines, within the New Normal context. A quantitative descriptive survey involved 100 purposively recruited practitioners and drew on Goldblatt's (2011) five-phase framework: Research, Design, Planning, Coordination, and Evaluation. A researcher-developed survey measured the reported frequency of digital practices, while semi-structured interviews with ten practitioners provided contextual information. The overall weighted mean was $M = 4.15$, classified as Above Average under the study's predefined scale. Coordination had the highest mean ($M = 4.55$, Excellent), while Evaluation had the lowest ($M = 4.00$, Above Average). The 0.55-point difference is descriptive; no inferential test of differences between phases was reported. Interview accounts identified time pressure, limited training in data tools, and the absence of structured evaluation systems as barriers. The findings identify evaluation practices as a relative area for further training-needs assessment among comparable practitioner groups. Professional education and continuing development initiatives may consider post-event analytics, outcome measurement, and the use of findings in planning. Because the study used purposive recruitment and self-reported measures, its findings do not establish population-wide digital competence, objectively observed event performance, or causal effects of digital tools or training.

Keywords: digital integration, event leadership, event management, Goldblatt's framework, New Normal, practitioner performance, professional education

Date Received:	March 31, 2026
Date Revised:	August 3, 2026
Date Accepted:	September 30, 2026
Date Published:	October 15, 2026



Introduction

The event management profession has gone through a remarkable transformation since the COVID-19 pandemic upended conventional practice. What once relied on in-person site visits, face-to-face planning sessions, and paper-based logistics has largely migrated to digital platforms, cloud-based systems, and virtual collaboration tools. In the Philippines — and Metro Manila in particular — this shift, broadly described as the transition to the “New Normal,” went far beyond surface-level adjustment. It demanded a deep rethinking of how events are researched, designed, planned, coordinated, and evaluated (Bowdin et al., 2011; Getz, 2012).

For educators and curriculum developers working in event management and hospitality programs, this transformation raises a critical issue regarding whether practitioners have genuinely absorbed and effectively applied these digital changes in their day-to-day work. Knowing precisely where practitioners perform well — and where performance gaps persist — provides an empirical foundation for designing training programs that actually respond to professional realities. Without such evidence, curricula risk being built on assumptions rather than on what practitioners truly need.

Digital transformation, broadly defined as the deep structural integration of digital technology into professional practice that fundamentally alters how organizations and individuals create and deliver value (Vial, 2019), provides a useful context for examining the events industry. Kramer et al. (2023) identify communication, business writing, negotiation, and digital and technology skills as important areas of preparation for contemporary event professionals. These findings support examining how practitioners use digital tools in their work, without assuming that particular event formats produce the same outcomes across settings. This study draws on Vial's (2019) account of digital transformation and on professional competency frameworks to examine self-reported, phase-specific digital practices.

A growing body of literature confirms that post-pandemic event professionals require an expanded digital competency profile. A chronological review identifies a data-driven and post-pandemic phase in event communication research from 2020 to 2026, with increasing attention to digital communication and related technologies (Abdul Khalid et al., 2026). Research on contemporary event professionals also identifies a need for digital and technology skills alongside general business competencies (Kramer et al., 2023). Emerging scholarship on discrete digital tools reinforces this trajectory: Abdul Halim et al. (2023) document the growing integration of artificial intelligence into event planning and attendee engagement, while Khan et al. (2025) trace how livestreaming technologies have reshaped the delivery stage of the event lifecycle. Despite this, there remains a significant empirical gap: while prior studies have examined event management competencies and frameworks in general terms (Allen et al., 2011; Getz, 2012; Goldblatt, 2011), limited empirical research has evaluated digital performance specifically across the five phases of Goldblatt's framework in the post-pandemic Philippine context. Most existing studies address virtual event adoption from an attendee perspective rather than examining practitioner-level digital competency across the full event management lifecycle. The limited Philippine-based literature that does exist, such as Evardone et al.'s (2021) competency assessment of Taguig City event managers, has centered on TESDA-aligned service competencies rather than digital performance specifically, leaving research addressing the digital competency demands of Metro Manila's event sector — a market

distinguished by its scale, cultural distinctiveness, and varied access to digital infrastructure — virtually absent from the peer-reviewed literature.

Goldblatt's (2011) five-phase event management framework — encompassing Research, Design, Planning, Coordination, and Evaluation — offers a structured lens for examining practitioner performance systematically. The model is widely used in both academic research and industry training precisely because its sequential structure mirrors the actual lifecycle of event delivery, from initial concept through post-event review (Allen et al., 2011; Silvers, 2012). By mapping performance ratings onto each of these five phases, it becomes possible to identify not only how practitioners are performing overall, but also where digital integration has been most effectively realized and where it still falls short.

This article reports the results of a quantitative investigation into the digital performance of event leadership management among practitioners in Metro Manila, Philippines. It aims to assess the level of performance across all five phases of Goldblatt's framework within the New Normal context, and to interpret those findings in terms of their implications for professional training, leadership competency development, and educational program design. The central research question guiding the study was: what is the level of digital performance of event leadership management in terms of the practices and strategies applied across the Research, Design, Planning, Coordination, and Evaluation phases?

Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to characterize the self-reported frequency of digital practices among the surveyed event management practitioners across Goldblatt's five phases. The aim was to describe these responses at a defined point in time, rather than test causal hypotheses or manipulate variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because recruitment was purposive, the findings describe the participating group and are not estimates representative of all event practitioners in Metro Manila.

To enrich and contextualize the quantitative findings, the study incorporated a supplementary qualitative component through semi-structured interviews. This approach aligns with an explanatory-supplementary mixed-methods design at the embedded level (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), in which qualitative data explain and deepen—rather than parallel—the quantitative strand. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework.

Participants and Sampling

The study population comprised event management practitioners actively operating in Metro Manila during the New Normal period. For inclusion, respondents were required to be engaged full-time or project-based in event planning, production, or coordination, with a minimum of two (2) years of professional experience. Purposive sampling was employed as the primary technique, selected because the study required respondents meeting specific professional criteria that could not be guaranteed through random general population sampling. Purposive sampling is widely accepted for competency assessments targeting defined professional populations (Patton, 2015). The researchers recruited respondents through professional networks, industry associations, and corporate event departments in Metro Manila.

A total of 100 respondents participated in the quantitative survey. The sample comprised eligible participants recruited through the stated professional networks, industry associations, and corporate event departments; it was not a probability sample representative of Metro Manila's event practitioner population. For the qualitative component, ten (10) key informants were drawn from the survey respondents using criterion-based purposive sampling (minimum five years' experience; direct involvement in digital transition during the New Normal; willingness to participate in a recorded interview). The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes via video conferencing platforms.

Research Instrument

A researcher-developed survey instrument measured digital performance across the five event management phases. The instrument comprised Section A (respondent background: age, sex, years of experience, employment type, primary event sector) and the main assessment instrument (Parts I–V, corresponding to the five phases). Each phase was operationalized through five (5) indicator items — yielding 25 items total — adapted from Goldblatt's (2011) competency descriptors and reformulated to reflect digital performance behaviors specific to the New Normal context. Representative indicators included: "I use digital research tools (e.g., online surveys, social listening platforms) to gather event stakeholder data" (Phase I — Research); "I leverage digital design tools to conceptualize and present event concepts to clients" (Phase II — Design); "I use project management software to develop and monitor event planning timelines" (Phase III — Planning); "I utilize digital coordination platforms to manage vendors and on-site teams in real time" (Phase IV — Coordination); and "I use data analytics tools to evaluate event performance and generate post-event reports" (Phase V — Evaluation). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale: 5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, 1 = Never.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by a panel of five specialists: three event management and hospitality education faculty members, one senior event director with over ten years of industry experience, and one quantitative research methodologist. Items were rated on relevance, clarity, and phase alignment using a four-point Content Validity Index (CVI) scale. The final instrument achieved a scale-level CVI of 0.92, indicating strong content validity. We assessed instrument reliability through a pilot test with 20 event practitioners not included in the main sample. Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated acceptable to high internal consistency across all phase subscales: Phase I — Research ($\alpha = 0.84$), Phase II — Design ($\alpha = 0.86$), Phase III — Planning ($\alpha = 0.87$), Phase IV — Coordination ($\alpha = 0.89$), Phase V — Evaluation ($\alpha = 0.82$), and overall instrument ($\alpha = 0.91$). All values exceeded the threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (George & Mallery, 2019), confirming the instrument's reliability.

Data Analysis

Digital performance was operationalized as the self-reported frequency of the digital practices included in the instrument, rated from Never to Always. These ratings were not independently observed measures of digital competence or event outcomes. The predefined score interpretations were: 4.21–5.00 (Excellent), 3.41–4.20 (Above Average), 2.61–3.40 (Average), 1.81–2.60 (Below Average), and 1.00–1.80 (Poor). Weighted means and corresponding verbal interpretations summarized each phase for the surveyed group.

The labels are study-specific interpretations of reported practice frequencies, rather than externally benchmarked competence levels. Frequency and percentage were used to profile respondents' backgrounds. Qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and mapped against quantitative phase scores to provide explanatory depth, particularly for phases where performance diverged from the overall trend.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's affiliated institution before data collection. All participants provided written informed consent before being included in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. No personally identifiable information was included in the presentation of findings. Data handling complied with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

Results

This section presents the quantitative findings from the survey, organized according to the five phases of Goldblatt's (2011) event management framework. Table 1 summarizes the weighted mean scores and corresponding verbal interpretations for each phase; Appendix A presents the item-level statements and sub-indicator weighted means underlying each phase score.

Table 1

Level of Digital Performance Across Goldblatt's Five Event Management Phases

Phase	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Research	4.05	Above Average
Design	4.13	Above Average
Planning	4.04	Above Average
Coordination	4.55	Excellent
Evaluation	4.00	Above Average

Note. Scale: 4.21–5.00 = Excellent; 3.41–4.20 = Above Average; 2.61–3.40 = Average; 1.81–2.60 = Below Average; 1.00–1.80 = Poor

Research Phase

The Research phase earned a weighted mean of $M = 4.05$, placing it within the study's Above Average range. Surveyed practitioners reported frequent use of the digital research practices included in the instrument. Digital analytics, social media audience data, and searchable databases can support evidence-informed event conceptualization, consistent with the role of evidence-based practice discussed by Getz (2012). The mean summarizes reported practice frequency in this group; it does not independently establish research competence or population-wide adoption.

Design Phase

The Design phase recorded the second-highest weighted mean ($M = 4.13$), interpreted as Above Average. The five Design items addressed tools for concept development, collaboration, visualization, hybrid formats, and client presentation. The mean summarizes how frequently respondents reported these practices; it does not independently assess creative or technical competence, or establish how hybrid formats changed creative performance. From a pedagogical standpoint, design curricula can provide opportunities to practice digital tools alongside creative development, with both dimensions assessed directly.

Planning Phase

The Planning phase produced a weighted mean of $M = 4.04$, interpreted as Above Average. This summarizes reported use of project management, registration, vendor communication, shared calendars, and workflow tools within the participating group. Silvers (2012) provides a broader account of professional event coordination, offering context for these planning activities. The present survey did not test whether digital tools improved planning outcomes or professional maturity. Curricula can continue to develop these practices through hands-on, problem-based learning experiences, with their effectiveness evaluated separately.

Coordination Phase

Coordination had the highest phase mean ($M = 4.55$), classified as Excellent under the study's interpretive scale. Respondents reported frequent use of the real-time communication, vendor coordination, and task-tracking practices included in the instrument. These ratings describe reported frequency rather than independently observed mastery, efficiency, or reliability of event delivery. For professional educators, the descriptive pattern may inform a review of the balance between coordination training and other phase-specific needs; it does not demonstrate the effectiveness of a particular curricular allocation.

Evaluation Phase

The Evaluation phase registered the lowest weighted mean among the five phases ($M = 4.00$, Above Average), with sub-indicator scores ranging from 3.90 to 4.25. Digital feedback instruments and analytics platforms can support systematic post-event data collection. In this survey, the Evaluation mean was descriptively lower than the means for the operationally focused phases. Qualitative interview data provide important context: several key informants described evaluation as the phase most vulnerable to deprioritization under time pressure — characterizing it as "the stage we know we need to improve but rarely have structured systems for." In this sample, Evaluation had the lowest mean digital-practice rating, although it remained within the Above Average range. Variation in the item-level means identifies particular evaluation practices for further inquiry within this sample; it does not estimate the distribution of individual competencies in the population.

Synthesis

Taken together, the results describe self-reported digital-practice frequencies within the surveyed group. All five phases fell within the study's Above Average or Excellent categories. The 0.55-point descriptive difference between Coordination ($M = 4.55$, Excellent) and Evaluation ($M = 4.00$, Above Average) may inform professional

development priorities for comparable practitioner groups; it does not establish population-wide competence or objective performance.

A 0.55-point gap on the five-point scale is more than half a response interval. This comparison is descriptive rather than inferential, since no significance testing was conducted. The difference does not by itself establish how much practitioners invested in each phase, explain its causes, or demonstrate consequences for event outcomes. Its practical implications should be examined through further assessment of evaluation practices and training needs.

Curriculum planners may consider retaining and updating operational training while assessing the need for additional work on reflective and evaluative practices. The phase pattern provides descriptive input for this review, rather than a test of the effectiveness of a particular curriculum or intervention.

Discussion

The surveyed practitioners reported frequent use of the digital practices included in all five phases of Goldblatt's (2011) framework. Their phase means fell within the study's Above Average or Excellent categories. Viewed alongside Vial's (2019) account of digital transformation, the findings offer a descriptive account of reported practice in this group. The cross-sectional survey does not establish that the pandemic caused changes in these practices or demonstrate independently observed digital competence.

The phase means differed descriptively, and the pattern may inform professional education priorities for comparable practitioner groups. Schmidt et al. (2023) identify analytical skills and data self-efficacy among the competencies relevant to leadership in data-driven settings. These areas are related to the analytics and reporting practices included in the Evaluation phase. The relatively lower Evaluation mean can inform further training-needs assessment; the study did not test a leadership intervention.

Research's above-average score ($M = 4.05$) describes respondents' reported use of the pre-event digital practices included in the instrument. It should not be interpreted as evidence about the order in which practitioners developed digital skills, because the survey did not track changes over time. Existing local research, such as Evardone et al.'s (2021) TESDA-based competency assessment, examined broader professional competencies. The present study provides a complementary, descriptive account of phase-specific digital practices in the sample.

Design's score ($M = 4.13$) suggests that respondents often used the digital design practices included in the instrument. The score does not independently establish how hybrid formats changed their creative performance. For design curricula, the finding supports providing opportunities to practice digital tools alongside creative judgment and assessing both dimensions directly.

Planning's mean ($M = 4.04$) describes frequent reported use of the relevant digital practices in this group. Silvers (2012) provides context for coordinated event planning, but the present survey does not establish change over time or the effects of digital tools on professional maturity. Problem-based, scenario-driven training could be considered to support these practices, with its effectiveness assessed separately.

Coordination's mean ($M = 4.55$), classified as Excellent using the study's scale, reflects frequent reported use of the relevant practices. Bowdin et al. (2011) discuss coordination within event management, providing context for its professional relevance. The present

study did not measure whether client visibility, failure pressure, or accountability explains the phase means, nor whether practitioner investment differs across phases. Educators could examine these possible explanations in further research and assess whether structured feedback or accountability mechanisms support evaluation practice.

Evaluation's comparatively low score ($M = 4.00$) is the finding this study returns to most often, and the qualitative interviews provide context for this relative rating. Practitioners did not describe evaluation as unimportant; several described it, in their own words, as the stage they knew needed attention but had no structured system to support. These accounts suggest that structured evaluation procedures may be a useful focus for professional development; the study did not measure institutional memory over time. Read together with the barriers practitioners named — time pressure, absent evaluation systems, limited training in data tools — the accounts suggest organizational options to evaluate, including structured evaluation workflows and access to appropriate tools, alongside individual professional development.

The 0.55-point descriptive difference highlights Evaluation as a relative area for further assessment in the surveyed group. Goldblatt's (2011) framework places evaluation within the event management cycle, providing a basis for considering how reported evaluation practices could be strengthened. The present results do not establish the professionalization trajectory of the broader Metro Manila event sector.

Limitations

The findings are limited to the 100 purposively recruited survey participants and the ten interview participants. Recruitment through professional networks, industry associations, and corporate event departments does not establish population representativeness. The quantitative instrument measured self-reported frequencies of digital practices rather than independently observed competence or event outcomes. Phase comparisons are descriptive, without statistical significance testing, and the cross-sectional design does not establish causal effects or the sequence of skill development. The results should therefore inform further assessment and context-sensitive professional development, rather than population-wide performance claims.

Conclusion

Among the 100 purposively recruited event management practitioners surveyed in Metro Manila, self-reported digital-practice frequency had an overall weighted mean of $M = 4.15$, classified as Above Average using the study's predefined scale. Coordination had the highest phase mean ($M = 4.55$, Excellent), while Evaluation had the lowest ($M = 4.00$, Above Average). These descriptive findings indicate more frequent reported use of the coordination practices than the evaluation practices included in the instrument. They do not establish population-wide digital competence, the effectiveness of professional development pathways, or independently observed performance. Qualitative accounts identified time pressure and the absence of structured evaluation systems as barriers reported by participants.

The 0.55-point descriptive difference identifies a relative area for consideration in professional development and curriculum review for comparable practitioner groups. It does not establish a statistically significant difference or an effect on event outcomes. Broader sampling, objective assessments, and longitudinal research would help examine how the findings apply beyond this group and how digital practices change over time.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to key stakeholder groups:

For Professional Education Programs and Higher Education Institutions:

Event management curricula should introduce structured, outcomes-focused coursework in digital evaluation literacy, encompassing practical instruction in post-event analytics tools, frameworks for interpreting financial and attendance outcomes, and methods for converting post-event data into actionable strategic plans. Treating evaluation competency as iteratively developed — rather than as a procedural endpoint — would address the most evidence-supported gap identified in this study and better equip practitioners to function as reflective, learning-oriented event leaders.

For Professional Associations and Industry Organizations:

Professional associations in the Philippine event sector are encouraged to develop continuing professional development programs explicitly targeting Phase V (Evaluation) digital competencies, including workshops on event analytics platforms, post-event data reporting, and key performance indicator (KPI) dashboard management. Industry-wide adoption of standardized digital evaluation protocols would help normalize evaluation as a non-negotiable professional practice component.

For Policymakers in Hospitality and Tourism:

Government agencies overseeing the events and tourism sector are encouraged to review competency standards for event management professionals to explicitly include digital performance benchmarks across all five phases. Integration of digital evaluation standards into existing TESDA qualifications frameworks would provide regulatory support for the competency development directions identified in this study.

For Future Researchers:

Future studies are encouraged to replicate this phase-level digital performance assessment in other Philippine regions to enable inter-regional comparison, and to investigate the relationship between digital performance and measurable event outcomes (client satisfaction, event ROI, repeat engagement). Longitudinal tracking of digital performance changes as the New Normal evolves, and experimental testing of targeted digital competency training programs — particularly for Phase V — using pre-test/post-test designs would further advance the evidence base for event management professional development.

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- Supplementary Materials:** The complete survey instrument and the item-level (sub-indicator) weighted mean scores underlying each phase's overall rating are presented in Appendix A.
- Funding:** "This research received no external funding."
- Acknowledgments:** The author extends sincere gratitude to the 100 event management practitioners in Metro Manila who generously contributed their time and insights to this study. Their participation made this research possible.
- Conflict of Interest:** "The author declares no conflict of interest."

Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in full compliance with ethical standards governing research involving human participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's affiliated institution prior to commencement of data collection. All participants provided written informed consent prior to their involvement in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents were maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. No personally identifiable information was disclosed in the presentation of findings. All data collection and handling procedures adhered to applicable ethical standards for research involving human participants, consistent with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).



Appendix A

Item-Level Statements and Sub-Indicator Weighted Mean Scores by Phase

The table below presents the 25 individual survey items comprising the five-phase instrument referenced in the Research Instrument subsection, together with each item's weighted mean and verbal interpretation. Item-level means aggregate to the phase-level weighted means reported in Table 1.

Phase	Item No.	Indicator Statement	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Research (M = 4.05)	1	I use digital research tools (e.g., online surveys, social listening platforms) to gather event stakeholder data.	4.20	Above Average
Research (M = 4.05)	2	I access digital analytics and social media insights to understand target audience preferences before planning an event.	4.10	Above Average
Research (M = 4.05)	3	I use online databases and industry reports to research market trends relevant to upcoming events.	4.00	Above Average
Research (M = 4.05)	4	I evaluate competitor and industry benchmarking data using digital research platforms.	3.95	Above Average
Research (M = 4.05)	5	I apply digital survey tools to validate client requirements and expectations prior to the design stage.	4.00	Above Average
Design (M = 4.13)	6	I leverage digital design tools to conceptualize and present event concepts to clients.	4.25	Excellent
Design (M = 4.13)	7	I use cloud-based collaboration platforms to co-create event concepts with remote team members.	4.15	Above Average
Design (M = 4.13)	8	I incorporate 3D visualization or virtual walkthrough tools when presenting event layouts to clients.	4.10	Above Average
Design (M = 4.13)	9	I adapt design concepts to accommodate both in-person and virtual/hybrid audience experiences.	4.05	Above Average
Design (M = 4.13)	10	I use digital moodboards or presentation software to communicate design direction to stakeholders.	4.10	Above Average
Planning (M = 4.04)	11	I use project management software to develop and monitor event planning timelines.	4.15	Above Average
Planning (M = 4.04)	12	I use digital registration platforms to manage attendee sign-ups and payments.	4.10	Above Average

Phase	Item No.	Indicator Statement	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Planning (M = 4.04)	13	I coordinate vendor communications and contracts through digital platforms.	4.00	Above Average
Planning (M = 4.04)	14	I use shared digital calendars or scheduling tools to align planning tasks across the team.	3.95	Above Average
Planning (M = 4.04)	15	I apply automated workflow or checklist tools to track planning milestones.	4.00	Above Average
Coordination (M = 4.55)	16	I utilize digital coordination platforms to manage vendors and on-site teams in real time.	4.65	Excellent
Coordination (M = 4.55)	17	I use real-time messaging applications to communicate with on-site staff during events.	4.60	Excellent
Coordination (M = 4.55)	18	I use video-based project management tools to monitor tasks during live event execution.	4.55	Excellent
Coordination (M = 4.55)	19	I use digital task-tracking systems to manage distributed teams across event venues.	4.50	Excellent
Coordination (M = 4.55)	20	I resolve on-site issues by coordinating digitally with vendors and stakeholders in real time.	4.45	Excellent
Evaluation (M = 4.00)	21	I use data analytics tools to evaluate event performance and generate post-event reports.	4.25	Excellent
Evaluation (M = 4.00)	22	I use digital feedback instruments (e.g., online surveys) to collect attendee satisfaction data.	4.00	Above Average
Evaluation (M = 4.00)	23	I analyze post-event data to measure return on investment or client-defined success metrics.	3.95	Above Average
Evaluation (M = 4.00)	24	I use KPI dashboards or reporting software to communicate event outcomes to stakeholders.	3.90	Above Average
Evaluation (M = 4.00)	25	I translate post-event analytics into actionable recommendations for future events.	3.90	Above Average

Note. Item-level weighted means are averaged to derive each phase's overall score reported in Table 1. Verbal interpretation follows the same scale: 4.21–5.00 = Excellent; 3.41–4.20 = Above Average; 2.61–3.40 = Average; 1.81–2.60 = Below Average; 1.00–1.80 = Poor.