

Trade fair organisers use technology to beat fraudsters

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Organisers of the recent Nairobi International Trade Fair have recorded a 60% increase in revenue following the adoption of a crowd management and ticketing technology. The Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK), organisers of the trade fair were able to stop ticket losses after they adopted a system that uses 2D bar coding system.

"Fraudsters tested this system immeasurably but failed. It is amazing sitting in a control room and seeing fraudsters fail at their game again and again," Batram Muthoka, the ASK chief executive officer noted.

In previous years, fraudsters would reprint tickets within hours of sale of the first ticket and analysis showed that the fake discounted tickets would sell more than the genuine tickets leading to heavy losses in entry fees and car park ticketing revenue.

Making ticket counterfeiting impossible

This year, the ASK used its website for the first time to sell tickets to showgoers helping relieve pressure at the gates. Online ticket buyers paid using M-Pesa and Airtel money with the transaction taking less than three minutes. ASK adopted a system that assigns each ticket sold a unique number that when scanned at the gate and parking entry is then circulated instantly to all gates by a central server making ticket counterfeiting impossible.

"If someone passed his ticket to another over the fence, he had up to a second or so before the ticket was turned away," says Muthoka.

Crowd management

The technology loads an intelligent accounting back-end is and is able to make reports on ticket sales, attendance and issue security alerts. The real time sales and crowd management analytics also assisted in the management and the security apparatus respectively.

"We are happy. We are now able to match the number of people in attendance at the show to the revenue collected," he said.

In 2011, over 400 000 people attended the show with gate fees at KSh 250 per adult amounting to an average of KSh 100 million (US\$ 1.2 million). However, the revenues collected were much lower.

The 2012 attendance was higher than 2011 and ASK is expected to announce final numbers at the end of the week after ongoing reconciliation processes are complete. The trade fair this year also attracted participation from over 50 countries including Ghana, India, France and China.

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