

How Virtual Conferences in the Scientific Conference Industry Stimulate Attendee's Psychological Well-being

Miss CHEUNG Audrey, BA (Hons) in Public Relations and Management,
Faculty of Management and Hospitality

Supervisor: Miss LEE Man Fung Stephanie, Lecturer

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the world and halted organisation of in-person scientific conferences as countries implemented lockdowns and restriction policies to mitigate the spread of the virus. These restrictions and digitalisation of modern communication technologies limited in-person scientific conferences and accelerated the adaptation of virtual conferences. Scholars suggest that participation in events contributes to one's psychological well-being through the enjoyment of the event. With future conference trends becoming more hybrid in nature, it is important to know the attendees' psychological outcomes when they attend virtual conferences to incorporate its beneficial elements into future hybrid conferences and maximise attendee's satisfaction. This report aims to help bridge the research gap on the lack of measurement of virtual conference attendee's psychological well-being.

Research Question

To investigate attendee's Positive Emotion; Engagement; Relationship; Meaning; and Accomplishment dimension within the PERMA model when attending virtual scientific conferences.



Methodology

Literature Review

Literature papers are gathered from online literature database Google Scholar

Search Keywords Entered:

- Subjective Well-being
- PERMA Model
- Virtual Medical Conference
- Virtual Conference

Paper selection criteria:

- Published after 2019 (ensure result relevancy)
- About conference participant's well-being in virtual medical/ scientific conference

Result analysis

20 papers are selected and used for result synthesis

Findings

Virtual conferences attendees' psychological well-being is stimulated from these aspects:

Positive Emotion is gained from:



- Reduced attendance cost
- Increased participant diversity due to low / no registration fees in virtual conferences
- More focused in virtual conferences
- Virtual networking opportunities

Engagement is gained from:

- Easier question-asking format (provided by chatbox feature in online conference platforms)
- Virtual break-out rooms that emulate physical conference interaction environment
- Networking with researchers from different backgrounds due to increased participant diversity

Relationship is gained from:



- Low registration fees allows junior researchers and researchers from low-income regions to attend, giving them a platform to showcase their work and interact with others
- Connecting with like-minded researchers and foster a sense of community
- Messaging features in conference platforms help attendees to regain social connections that were lost due to COVID-19

Meaning is gained from:

- Reduced carbon emission from traveling to conference hosting country
- Increased programme quality and diversity as different groups attended virtual conferences

Achievement is gained from:



- Successful attending virtual conferences create sense of accomplishment, increasing their satisfaction
- Lower attendance barrier provides chance for young researchers to join and network with senior professionals
- Contribution to environment as reduced travel helps lowering carbon emission

Conclusion

Different elements in virtual scientific conferences bring positive effects on attendees' psychological well-being. Future empirical research needs to be conducted to fully understand the extent of virtual conferences' effect on attendee's psychological outcome.