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Perception and Valuation of Digital Events – A Case Study Based on a Digital Tourism Trade Fair in Germany

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Abstract

The aim of our study is to analyze digital events using the example of a tourism trade fair. The focus is on the question of how people experience digital events. For this purpose we evaluate the transmission of information, the acceptance of technical possibilities and the overall evaluation of an event. We use a qualitative empirical research design based on a single case study. The results show that participants have hardly any problems in dealing with digital technologies. However, the participants miss the social interaction and emotional immersion at digital events. This shows a big difference to physical events. Future immersive applications may be able to circumvent this shortcoming by addressing several senses and thus also emotionally involving visitors to digital events. The study contributes to research on the perception of digital events and gives organizers valuable advice on what to pay special attention to when organizing them.

Keywords: Digital events, Single case study, Tourism trade fair, Corona pandemic experience

1. Introduction

The Corona pandemic has changed the world, and one industry that was still very much affected by it is the event industry. Many event organizers had to react quickly and adapt to the unusual situation. When the pandemic broke out in 2020, it led to many restrictions and especially event bans, which in turn caused a deep crisis for the event industry (Ziakas *et al.*, 2021). There were three strategies that could be observed during this period: First, to cancel all types of events. The Trade Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (FAMA) reported nearly 5000 canceled trade fairs worldwide at the end of 2020 (FAMA, 2020, Doppler *et al.*, 2021). A second option was to postpone the events and thirdly to hold the events in hybrid or digital form.

The Corona pandemic has (Luppold, 2021) led organizers and agencies having to find new ways very quickly and agilely to get out of the problematic situation (Doppler *et al.*, 2021). Digitalization played a decisive role in this. Moreover, people were connected like never before through the internet. Many people are only a mouse click away from a digital event, like virtual events, webinars, virtual conferences/concerts and hybrid events (Khaleque and Krasteva, 2021). However, the topic of digital event formats did not just emerge from the Corona crisis, but has been discussed in expert

circles for many years (Sox *et al.,* 2017). One question in particular has been discussed by the experts: Can live communication be replaced by digital communication? Some experts assume that live communication cannot be replaced because internet communication does not create trust and emotions. Theese only come about in a direct encounter (Doppler *et al.,* 2021). These authors rate the virtual spaces for trade fairs, the digital events and conferences as "ineffective" (Luppold, 2021). However, 2020 has partly shown the opposite, with organizers themselves reporting that emotions and online events can go together quite well (Strohm-Knauer, 2021). There are also benefits of digital and hybrid events that cannot be overlooked, such as the cost and time savings, as well as the lower travel activity, which furthermore helps to protect the environment (Jauhiainen, 2021; Liu *et al.,* 2019). Another focus has been on the acceptance and use of new digital technologies in the context of events (Sox and Campbell, 2018). An analysis of the current literature on the topic of "digital events" and "perception of digital events" shows that the debate has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Various aspects have been highlighted since the outbreak of the pandemic. One is the exclusion of older people from social participation (Perdana and Mokhtar, 2022; Seifert, 2020). Furthermore, the following topics are discussed: the influence on the consumption of sporting events (Neus, 2020), the digital possibilities for the implementation of various large-scale social events (Riemer and Seymour 2021; Jauhiainen, 2021), the role of sustainability with increasing virtualization of the event culture (Jauhiainen, 2021; Liu *et al.,* 2019), the implementation of digital offerings by museums (Querci and Gazzola, 2021), the role of experiential technologies and the creative industries in shaping digital events (Khaleque and Krasteva, 2021), the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the event industry as a whole (Slabic, 2021; Madhusankha *et al.*, 2020) and on event management (Simge and Yazar, 2021; Schettimo, 2022). So far, there are only a few empirical studies that deal specifically with the perception of events by visitors. The following study focuses on this aspect and aims to answer the following research question: How do visitors experience digital events? To answer this main research question, it is divided into three research sub-questions: How does the communication of content succeed in the context of digital events? How do users deal with the new technological tools? What are the advantages and disadvantages of digital events from the visitors' point of view? To answer these questions, the tourism trade fair event Wissen.21digital will be examined in the form of a case study. The differences in the perception and experience of analogue events compared to digital events have already been experienced more or less consciously by many people due to the Corona-related upheavals. For the organizers of such events as well as for the developers of the systems used for them, it is therefore an important question how the users experience these possibilities. The data obtained can be used to improve and adapt future offers and formats of this kind.

2. Theoretical Background

"An event is a service in which a group of people participate in a temporary experience at the same time, in the same place and/or via media and which is organized by a third party. The event is arranged by an organizer who acts as an individual or in the form of an institution (e.g., company, non-commercial institution) and who thus pursues either commercial (e.g., profit-making, conveying marketing messages) or non-commercial goals (e.g., education, conveying political or religious content)" (Drengner, 2014). From this definition one can deduce that participation in an event is independent of whether one is physically present or attends the event via technical-medial transmission. Many things that could only be done in real physical proximity in the past can now also be done digitally and without physical proximity—at least on certain levels. The goal of a digital trade fair is not much different from a physical event—it can be seen as a digital marketing event, whereby it is about the presentation of goods or services. Today, digital trade fairs tend to follow the classic course of physical trade fairs. In order to make it easier for visitors to quickly find their way around and to locate the desired suppliers as easily as possible in the virtually recreated rooms, concepts are used that are more typical of the classic trade fair, such as "exhibition hall", "trade fair stand", "trade fair catalogue", "workshop rooms", "stages" for lectures and discussions, etc. (Schulz, 2017; Siebert, 2021). In the context of digital events, it plays an important role, how to reach and engage participants in an appealing way and maintain this state as much as possible during an event. For this reason, attention is paid to the customer experience, especially in the case of digital events. The German sociologist Schulze defines experiences as follows: "Experiences are not received by the subject, but are made by him. What comes from outside becomes an experience only through processing" (Schulze, 1996). In a more recent study about brand management, Kilian defines experiences quite similar as follows: "Experiences are individually perceived events that arise in the emotional and experiential world of consumers and develop their subjectively perceived beneficial effect in the moment of situational use" (Kilian, 2007). Experiences are therefore a very individual matter and strongly dependent on the person experiencing them and the situation in which it finds itself. That means events can be actively staged with the aim of generating experiences for the consumer. However, the perception and valuation of an event is strongly dependent on individual perception and membership in a particular social milieu (Schulze, 1996). Discussions about the difference between physical and digital experiences state that experiences convey a sense of belonging and thus

represent a social value (Laurell and Sagfossen, n.d.). Visiting an art museum thus conveys to the visitor that he or she is part of the cultural and art community. The influence of the pandemic and the accompanying social distancing initially diminished the sense of social belonging. Interactions are more limited in the digital space. Only visual and auditory perception is possible, while all other senses are only involved to a limited extent. Immersive physical experiences, on the other hand, are multisensory and involve multiple senses, including touch, smell and taste (Laurell and Sagfossen, n.d.; Pine and Gilmore, 2011). The inclusion of these senses creates an atmosphere or a holistic experience, which are the basis of physical experiences and the satisfaction that comes with them. This experience also includes consciously being part of a larger group of people, noticing the body language of others, making eye contact and noticing the mood and emotions of other participants. "These cues are normally picked up by our mirror neurons in the brain. This process essentially makes us mirror the person we are listening to, in effect, creating the same state internally as we are observing, and thus understanding the other person better. As these small human communication signals do not transmit digitally, we lose communication granularity and ultimately quality and value in these interactions" (Laurell and Sagfossen, n.d.). Other differences are more related to the characteristics of the event. Compared to physical events, digital events are usually cheaper and more participants can be reached at once. However, this also comes with the perception of lower quality. Physical participation creates a sense of scarcity, which in turn creates desire and a higher valuation by visitors. Digital events and their increasing availability involve high competition for participants' attention. Physical events, on the other hand, gain added value solely through social affiliation and human interaction, which can reduce competition between different formats. Against the background of this comparison, the question arises as to how the event culture will change in the medium to long term. Will we see an increase in physical events because they have become more desirable due to the long lockdown and due to their advantages? Or will we see an increase in digital events because people have become accustomed to these formats? Alternatively, a third scenario is conceivable in which both coexist. With the research question: How do visitors experience digital events?, an attempt to add information to these future scenarios is being made.

3. Method

The research questions were investigated with the help of a qualitative case study. The trade fair event "Wissen.21digital", which was carried out digitally by the Thuringian Tourist Board in Erfurt, Germany, was chosen as the object of study. Because the topic of digital events in mass application is still relatively new and only few data exist on the research question, it made sense to gain an initial overview or impression of it using a qualitative method. Single case studies lend themselves to one-off events; they can also be used for special, outstanding or otherwise unique events or processes (Yin, 1994). As with many case studies, this one also has a concrete reference to a current topic. The data sources were own observations during the event as well as interview data, which was collected by interviewing participants after the digital event. The participants were asked specifically how they experienced the event. Ten post-event interviews were conducted between June 09, 2021 and August 10, 2021. Nine of these took place via MS Teams, one was conducted physically in the office of the interviewee. The participants were between 35 and 50 years old. The interviews were transcribed. The content analysis of the data was based on Mayring (2010). Categories were deductively created on the basis of the research questions. The interview questions were oriented towards the content of the categories of the research questions. Upper categories were named, which were then broken down into further differentiated subcategories, to which in turn those text passages of the transcribed interviews were assigned, which provided answers to the different areas of the research questions. Text passages that could be assigned to one of the categories were marked accordingly.

4. Case Study: Wissen.21digital in Thuringia/Germany

One of the first digital tourism fairs in Thuringia/Germany opened its doors on July 5, 2021 to welcome a professional audience of 259 visitors. The focus of Wissen.21digital was to create new ideas and inspiration for tourism professionals, to impart knowledge and to maintain and expand networks. For those just mentioned, there were also the corresponding offers such as workshops and lectures, a chat roulette, digital coffee gossip as well as the possibility to visit the exhibition stands in the virtually constructed exhibition halls. The event took place on a single day but the virtual fair was still open to visitors for a month. As several presentations were running at the same time, they were recorded and so those interested could watch them later on demand. Participation was free of charge. Visitors only had to register in advance and to create a profile. In the networking section, all participants could be found virtually—both the organizers and exhibitors as well as the visitors. All the information was created by the people themselves when they registered, such as their company, email, phone, company logo, and LinkedIn and/or Xing profiles. It was also possible to contact people via chat or video call within the event platform. There was also the possibility to exchange digital business cards.

The digital trade fair was created in 3D. Upon entering, the visitors were given a short introduction on the technical operation, how to move around in the virtual rooms either with the help of the mouse or the keyboard. Afterwards they entered the exhibition lobby where they were welcomed by avatars of the hosts. The fair consisted of two exhibition halls. In each hall there were stands where visitors could look at digital brochures or flyers as well as videos or get information about specific tourist objects. They could navigate their own movement around these places using the mouse or keyboard. Access to the workshop rounds and presentations was provided on the trade fair platform in the Agenda section. A list of speakers and topics appeared and with a simple click, visitors were directed to MS Teams, where the different sessions took place. They could use the full capacity of this tool —ask questions in the chat, show reactions with emojis, join in via audio or video, and so on. The networking part took place with the help of a chat roulette. The participants had two minutes to talk to each other and according to a roulette principle they were then passed on to the next person to talk to. They could talk to each other either by audio or by video. There was also a chat function. Another option that enabled networking was the above-mentioned profiles of the participants, through which they could also contact and connect with each other.

5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative interviews. The first question aimed to find out how the information was conveyed to the visitors. The second research question looked at how the new technological methods and offers were used. Here, the respondents expressed different opinions. Nevertheless, the majority did not find the technical operation in the exhibition hall problematic. The third sub-research question dealt with how the respondents evaluated the event.

Table 1: Content Mediation	
Basically, there were no problems with the reception of information.	"It worked out very well for me. Otherwise I would have just asked." (I2, para. 20) "Very well. [...] Everyone sat in their familiar surroundings. [...], I sometimes still had my fixed PC on and was able to do some research there in parallel, so to speak. That was accordingly very good, because it was multimedia." (I4, para. 10)
The style of the speakers is important for conveying information.	"I think it always depends a lot on the speaker. [...] I liked best those who spoke very vividly, very authentically. You automatically like to listen and stay on the ball [...]. Yes, it has a lot to do with the style of speaking and of course also with the content – am I really interested or less interested? (I3, para. 14)
The environment of the digital trade fair visitor plays an important role in conveying content.	"I deliberately took a leave of absence from my four-person office and moved to a colleague's office who was on leave, so I sort of had the space to myself and my peace and quiet. And signed off for the whole day." (I4, para. 14) "As a matter of principle, I try not to do such digital events from my workplace, but in my home office. That way you've already eliminated some sources of interference." (I2, para. 22)
Some distractions interfere with concentrated participation. This is different from physical event participation.	"Of course, it also happened that I had to answer my mobile phone and wasn't at the event the whole time. (I1, para. 12)" [...], you open your email programme on the side and look, [...], but there are definitely distraction factors and that is also more than in face-to-face events [...], you have the camera off, you are somehow anonymous and nobody sees you. And of course you do a few other things on the left and right." (I3, para. 16)" You usually do it during your working hours. That means you still have your work open as well." (I6, para. 10)- "[...] it is exhausting to maintain concentration for several hours. The limit is two hours. After that, you really need another break". (I3, para. 24)"One is relatively quickly distracted by other things or can be distracted by other things". (I6, para. 8)

Table 2: Dealing With Technical Tools

The technical handling was for the most part problem-free, although the depth of the impressions varied from person to person.	"It was always nicely explained how to move around, how to change the camera view. It went without a hitch. You could really imagine yourself moving in a room where objects were standing. You couldn't walk through it, you had to walk around it. And the function, like opening a video or reading through a poster – that went wonderfully. So that was really fun." (I5, para. 22)""It was less intuitive, so when I dragged the mouse to the right, but I swiped to the left. It took me a bit to get my head around it." (I4, para. 8)
Orientation on the platform was easy.	"Very easy to go through, also very intuitive [...]." (I3, para. 26)"So the exhibition hall was super and simply set up in a self-explanatory way." (I5, para. 22)
Technical support would have been helpful for some participants.	"[...] that the fair starts at 10 o'clock and then at nine everyone who wants to gets a short introduction. So I think a live introduction would be better [...]." (I6. para. 24)"Maybe you make them even more curious or something, so that you don't pretend everything, but say either "click on it again and wait and see what happens" or something. That is then the curiosity that is perhaps piqued." (I3, para. 8)

Table 3: Overall Evaluation of the Digital Event

Lectures can also be viewed after the event, which is very positive.	"Yes, I watched another lecture last week that I really wanted to see, but had then decided on another event during the trade." (I1, para. 26) "At physical events, it's usually not very good that you get the lectures as a script, as a PowerPoint or something else. Here you can practically watch them again, time-delayed. That's also a big advantage for me, because you often have other things at a digital conference table. You can look at it again afterwards in peace and quiet". (I2, para. 16)
Cost and time savings are cited as an advantage.	"The advantages are definitely the efficiency on various levels. So you save on travel costs, it's ecologically sustainable." (I2, para. 16) "The time factor too, of course. You click in and you're there. The whole journey, the business trip is all done away with." (I3, para. 12) "You can stay in your familiar surroundings. That is practical." (I4, para. 28)
Networking is perceived as easy and positive.	Elsewhere, the lack of emotionality in networking was criticized. " [. . .] you get to know each other digitally and if you have seen each other before, you also pick up the phone sometimes." (I2, para. 16) "It quickly became clear that this digital format is simply ingenious for exchanging information quickly and simply getting into contact very quickly in the group. Not only in the Thuringian Forest, but also to really get an overview nationwide and to learn from other regions as well." (I3, para. 2) "Disadvantage – networking, that it doesn't work so well and that emotions come across very little. " (I6, para. 8) "I think the only way to do it is to address specific people as a moderator or to try to say in the pre-event communication that you are not planning a lecture event but a dialogue [...]" (I2, para. 40).

Table 3 (Cont.)	
Anonymity is an advantage for some users.	"[...] if you yourself are not the type who likes to be the centre of attention, then logically you can also disappear a bit" (I6, para. 8).
One disadvantage is the lack of personal contact.	"What is disadvantageous for me in all digital events is that the actual exchange takes place at the coffee breaks on the sidelines. So this physical, human encounter, it's just not there, and in the digital world I sometimes sense an inhibition on the part of participants to say something, to switch on the microphone. [...], you simply can't compensate for that digitally". (I2, para. 16) "I think what the whole thing still lacks a bit is this presence in the digital, so that you no longer face each other when you ask a question or that you sometimes move very alone in these rooms." (I5, para. 6)
Chatroulette was a good opportunity for several participants to make new contacts as well as to revive or refresh existing contacts.	"[...] you somehow got straight to the point. You don't have time to throw around any empty phrases, but you got straight into the conversation. (I4, para. 16) "I think there are still a few barriers that need to be broken down, for example with an interactive chat roulette, [...]. I think games like that, I'll call them games, just loosen up the whole thing and could break down those barriers." (I5, para. 8)
Virtual rooms in which visitors can move freely and explore them playfully are well received by visitors.	"So these virtual rooms are very good, where you can move around with the arrow keys on the keyboard, so to speak. Or you click on a picture hanging on the wall and a video plays or a PDF opens. (I5, para. 6)"Yes, I think it's good that you have these displays where you can look at the individual brochures, the video is integrated, that you can actually see the person behind the PC as a picture, as an animation. That was quite nice, it makes it more personal somehow". (I4, para. 22)

Looking at the different answers, it is noticeable that there were sometimes significant differences in the experience and evaluation of some aspects of the digital event Wissen.21digital. The group of interviewees was a relatively similar selection of people in terms of their professional backgrounds—all of them came from the tourism industry or were professionally involved in tourism. In some cases, different people evaluated the same element of the event in completely opposite ways, e.g., the duration of two minutes in Chatroulette: one person thought it was much too short to get into a deeper communication, another thought it was good that no time was wasted with empty phrases and that one could get directly into a constructive exchange without hesitation. This example shows quite clearly how subjective the experience is, and also coincidences such as suddenly occurring technical problems influence the evaluation of such an experience. This shows a connection with the existing literature on the consumption of experiences, which has already been discussed in the theoretical part (Schulze, 1996; and Kilian, 2007). Experiences are very individual and strongly dependent on the situation, the subject's inner processing and its belonging to a certain social milieu (Schulze, 1996).

Q1. How can content be successfully communicated in the context of digital events?

As far as the communication of information is concerned, it can be clearly shown on the basis of the answers that it is possible to absorb the information relatively well. However, there were points that led to clearly different answers. The environment in which the participants found themselves while attending the event had a considerable influence on how well information could be absorbed. In addition to these influencing factors due to external conditions, other factors such as the lecturer's style of presentation also came into play. Here, every audience member has different preferences, both thematically and in terms of the style of presentation. In addition, one person explicitly stated that after a few hours it was tiring to sit permanently in front of the screen. This point confirms the view that the involvement of different senses in order to achieve a certain level of emotionality is an important factor that should be emphasized in virtual events. The more senses are involved, the more intense the experience is and this promotes the memorability of the experience. The role of the Experience Economy formulated by Pine and Gilmore (2011) also addresses this issue. Especially in the area of purely digital communication, the immersive quality of the experience is an important factor and a place where, according to the interviews, deficits were still felt and explicitly expressed. The less a person feels addressed as a human being, the less attention he or she will pay to the interaction. The role of immersive elements could be a way for digital events to increase the level of emotionality among participants. Since the development of immersive

worlds in virtual space is currently (as of 2021) progressing very quickly, it will probably be possible to say in a few years what is possible. In terms of the intensity of the experience, this form definitely has great potential to trigger strong and memorable experiences. Doppler *et al.*'s (2021) view that only physical meetings can generate experiences and trust seems to be refuted by the results presented here, even if the participants would have liked more involvement in some cases. The difference between physical and virtual meetings for the visitors was clearly mentioned, and also that something was missed in the digital form of communication, but basically the event was rated as good, also with regard to the communication among the participants, which functioned to a large extent. So here it is more about the achievable depth of the experience in online communication.

Q2. How do users deal with the new technological methods and offers?

Regarding the second research question, i.e., dealing with the new technological methods and offers, it turned out that most of the interviewees coped with the technological challenges fundamentally well. This may be partly due to the fact that all of the interviewees work in an office environment and already had a general basic knowledge of computers and digital communication. Particularly due to the Corona-related changes in everyday working life, especially in the area of office communication, some of the interviewees already had considerable experience of their own with digital communication tools and some had also already been to digital trade fairs. There were also differences between the participants—those who had more experience found it easier to cope with the format of Wissen.21digital. But these differences were small and all people were able to take part in the event and use the offers without restriction for the most part. The participants also managed the spatial orientation on the platform very well. The aforementioned background of experience certainly played a role here, but also the aspect that the structure and arrangement of the virtual trade fair hall was based on physical trade fairs made orientation in this area relatively easy, since one did not have to understand anything new, but simply recognised a familiar structure. This orientation coincides with the statements of Siebert (2021) and Schulz (2017) on the orientation function of familiar designations such as exhibition hall, etc. There were isolated difficulties in understanding, using and implementing the mobility options on the "fairgrounds", but these did not prevent the visitors from participating, they were merely experienced as unpleasant. On the one hand, individual human factors such as existing personal experience and affinity for technology, but also purely technical reasons such as the compatibility of different hardware devices with different versions of different operating systems, etc. have played a role here.

Q3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of digital events from the visitors' point of view?

A look at the third research question and thus the evaluations of the digital event with its advantages and disadvantages showed a lot of agreement among the respondents, but there were also some contradictory answers here. There was agreement on the point that the time and cost savings due to the elimination of travel to and from the event as well as accommodation and catering are an absolute advantage of digital events. In addition, they were considered to be more sustainable, as these circumstances conserve resources. The respondents mentioned the possibility of on-demand lectures as another major and repeatedly used advantage. This is a clear advantage of the digital version over the live event, where only one lecture can be chosen per time unit. For the networking aspect of the event studied, opinions differed considerably in some cases. As already mentioned at the beginning of this section, some participants felt that the time was too short, while others felt that it was just good to get ahead quickly. Here, individual communication habits, personal temperament and other individual factors certainly play a role in the length of time with which the best experiences are made. In any case, it can be stated that the possibility of getting to know different people in such a short time, or to get to know each other briefly at first, holds great potential for developing a contact in the further course of time. This can be an enormous added value, especially at trade events such as the trade fair under review, since it is rare to meet colleagues from all parts of the country in such close proximity. In addition, these contact rounds also brought a break from pure listening for the users, so that they could concentrate better during the next lectures. The topic of fatigue at the computer will probably remain interesting, since decreasing attention and concentration would lead to less content being absorbed. Especially the integration of the visitors into the digital format was sometimes experienced as difficult. Some participants took the opportunity to remain anonymous in the background without a camera, others showed clear inhibitions about asking questions or interacting with people. This opportunity to live out one's own shyness or reticence was seen by some as a disadvantage and by others as an advantage. From the organizers' point of view, the goal should be to actively involve as many people as possible in the event, but preferably in such a way that no one feels pressured. Because here again, personal experience plays a role in how the event is evaluated. Suggestions for social interaction and exchange are suitable for this. This is exactly what some of the interviewees wanted: more animation for the active participation of the visitors. And here, too, it remains to be seen what influence increasing immersion and heightened emotional experience will have on the participants' willingness to interact. Precisely because it was expressed several times that something "human" was missing in the digital contact and one person even explicitly

said that he or she felt alone in the exhibition hall, it is quite possible that the need to visually perceive other people in perceived spatial proximity in order to feel more like part of a group will be met with virtual and increasingly immersive formats. The suggestion of a short introduction on how to use the platform right before the start is something that already takes place at some events. Here, it depends on the organisation and implementation whether such offers are provided or not, and as Kemper (2021) describes, there are already digital events where tech hosts can be permanently contacted in advance and during the event to solve problems with the application for the participants. Whether and to what extent such needs are met certainly depends on the type and size of the event. A certain number of events can certainly benefit from the suggestion of asking participants about their favorite topics before the event, but it is probably not necessary and feasible for all of them. On the one hand, organizers know their user group, and on the other hand, they select the user group by choosing the topics offered. With appropriate market research, it would be possible to find out how to address as many people as possible with topics that are currently in high demand.

6. Conclusion

The paper analyzed how digital events are experienced by people. This was done with the subdivision into three areas of conveying information, dealing with the technological methods and offers as well as advantages and disadvantages of digital events. The results showed that all respondents were able to cope with the technology and the platform, including the associated offers, sufficiently to be able to participate in the event studied and to benefit from it. For the operation of the platform and the control at the trade fair, there were also partly contradictory experiences and evaluations by the users. These clear differences can be explained by the subjectivity of experiences concerning individual attitudes, situations and affiliation to a certain milieu or social group. The perceived experience of the participants still shows deficits compared to live communication. The respondents often missed a component that was associated with "human" or "personal". This aspect of the human need for contact and connection can certainly not be completely replaced by technical means, but improvements and approximations in this direction are very likely possible. This point is also being intensively researched by the providers of the technologies and the current developments in this area make us eagerly await what progress we will be able to observe in the future. Here, it would make sense to find out to what extent the influence of immersive elements changes the experience. The basic tone in the evaluation of the event under review was clearly positive in the vast majority. The corona pandemic has had a major influence on the fact that this form of event has become so well-known so quickly and is now regularly used by so many people. However, it is already apparent that despite existing deficits in emotionality or perceived communication quality, the many advantages of this format outweigh the disadvantages, so that it can be assumed that digital events will retain a permanent place in the world of events. New systems are coming, existing ones are being expanded or linked. While this paper was being written, Facebook published its plans for the Metaverse, based on virtual reality and many immersive elements, and the first platform providers of digital events have already announced that they will use these technologies, which represents a major step forward. This shows the fast pace of the industry and raises the question of how long the data collected and insights gained will remain meaningful as the environment changes so quickly. All in all, the case study is suitable for providing an overview for a special area of digital events, but it is not possible to draw major conclusions for the broad mass of such events. The various event formats and subject areas for which they are offered and the participant groups they address differ so much that it is not easy to formulate general statements about them. Especially in the field of digital events, development is progressing in leaps and bounds.

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