



# HYBRID EVENTS

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## *Hybrid events offer different possibilities of interaction and engagement with the stakeholders*

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Hybrid events have been growing in popularity and this expansion exploded during the pandemic, essentially because of online meetings and/or conferences (Rubinger et al., 2020). Hybrid events are those that simultaneously takes on a face-to-face and virtual dimension

(AIRMEET, 2021; Simons, 2019), in other words they are face-to-face events with live virtual broadcasts.

Encore Global (2021), which is a prestigious global organization that promotes events (in person, virtual and hybrid), suggests that the hybrid event format is here to stay. In the Encore Planner Pulse Survey, respondents (event promoters) said they intend to use a hybrid event strategy once post-pandemic face-to-face contacts are restored.

PCMA (Professional Convention Management Association), which is a world reference in the business events industry,

organized the PCMA Convening Leaders 2021 Global Broadcast Hub in Singapore. This event took place in omnichannel format, combining remote and face-to-face participation and experiences. Hybrid events were a major topic of discussion. However, during the Convention it was verified that there are still many doubts about the engagement of people in the context of a hybrid event (PCMA, 2021).

Further, a recent study carried out by UFI (The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) found a strong preference for live events among participants of international trade fairs,





using criteria of quality of networking, doing business, among others (UFI, 2021). Nevertheless, the study also demonstrates that there appear to be areas where digital events can add value, for instance, providing a complementary digital service and attracting new audiences.

Therefore, regardless of the event context, the current digital transformation suggests the exploration of hybrid events, where technology is used to support the participation of different stakeholders (Nelmarkka et al., 2018), be them attendees, organizers, sponsors, or suppliers.

Simons (2019) suggests that the elements inherent to an interaction can move from bodily co-presence to virtual co-presence and vice versa. In other words, the idiosyncrasies of a face-to-face moment (e.g. emotional energy) during the event can be leveraged to recruit people for online activities. On the other hand, the dynamics of online activities can also recruit people for offline activities during the event. So, hybrid events offer different possibilities of interaction and engagement with the stakeholders. This online/offline combination plays as an innovative marketing toolkit, for

example providing more personalized content that can be consumed anywhere and anytime. Simons (2019) also reveals that online interaction influences people's experience in offline interaction during the event. Therefore, there is a potential in hybrid events that deserves to be explored.

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## THE POPULARITY OF DIGITAL AND HYBRID EVENTS ENTAILS SOME SPECIFIC TRENDS

### CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing aims at creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content. In the context of hybrid events, content marketing will play an important role. The goal is to provide as much content value as possible to the event stakeholders

### SOCIAL NETWORKING MARKETING

Social networks are facilitators of social connections between people, groups or organizations that share the same interests. Event organizers can increase its visibility by taking advantage of social networks that will increase their influence in the promotion of hybrid events

### INCORPORATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Hybrid events require the use of appropriate tools and technologies that provide integrated experiences, connecting in-person and virtual stakeholders. For instance, virtual reality will be a great asset for future events, as well as artificial intelligence applied in events, 5G technologies, chatbots, among others

### DIGITAL OR HYBRID EVENTS AS PLATFORMS FOR MARKETING ACTIONS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SME)

Previously, events were normally considered in the marketing plans of big brands or companies. The opportunities and ease of use of hybrid event platforms allow access to small business

### MOBILE MARKETING

Most people regularly use their mobile device to access Internet content. Thus, when the participants want to access the digital contents of the hybrid event, it is very likely to use a smartphone. So, it is important to develop mobile marketing strategies in order to interact, engage and influence event stakeholders

### MULTIPLE MICRO-EVENTS

The technology or hybrid event platforms allow events at a scale adapted to the characteristics and objective of each organizer. This will lead to multiple micro-events

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Hybrid events will be data mines. Collecting, analysing, and interpreting data through analytical and logical reasoning will dictate the future of hybrid events

### ATTENDEES' SECURITY

Ensuring the safety of participants will be a relevant factor. On the one hand, event virtualisation brings some problems related to cybersecurity, namely data protection. On the other hand, face-to-face events still have some problems related to the pandemic phenomenon. Specifically, sanitary security measures will continue to apply during COVID 19 pandemic with technology playing a relevant role, such as blockchains, quick virus diagnosis tests, facial recognition, environmental purificators, among others.

**In conclusion, the event's strategy will certainly change in the coming times. In fact, most of the challenges of hybrid events revolve around the simultaneous networking and engagement of two groups of attendees (in-person and remote attendees). Therefore, the focus must be on the involvement of personal and virtual participation, thus enabling interactions between all participants to be facilitated, before, during and after the event.**