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A paradigm shift in event education

By Sponsored Content / The Edge Malaysia

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The event sector is rapidly developing, having rebounded from the effects of Covid-19. What was once considered conventional in the business has now expanded into new worlds and dimensions, astonishing and stunning stakeholders and attendees alike. As a result, there is a significant need for education and training programmes in event management and operations, with the skill sets and competencies required to bring novel ideas to life.

The opportunity to connect directly with the industry is one of the most significant aspects of event education. Stakeholders in the industry should meet



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on a regular basis, if they do not already, to discuss the necessity of quality assurance and management, as well as any required changes in skill sets as the sector expands and evolves. Students entering the workforce should be evaluated for employability and quality, as well as their ability to meet industry expectations and criteria.

However, one of the consequences of the pandemic on the event sector is the move from physical to virtual and, increasingly, hybrid events. However, although the virtual and hybrid modes have opened up new creative options, one of the challenges has been the rise of the virtual experience economy. As event planners continue to innovate in order to distinguish the experience and increase attendee pleasure, this is a natural

extension of perceived delegate value.

Individuals' "experience" gained through attending events is increasing in popularity among academics and those in the professional sector. Because of its subjective character, the study of experience has now been extended to fields other than psychology, sociology and philosophy, and now include marketing and management. Many academics and researchers in the field of consumer behaviour have researched how customers' motivations and behaviour have developed over time, with an emphasis on both utilitarian and hedonistic elements of the equation. How might these concepts and practices be applied to the event experience? As event expert Donald Getz contends, "If we cannot clearly articulate what the event experience is, then how can it be planned or designed? If we do not understand what it means to people, then how can it be important?"

The majority of people are interested in an event's experience from a management and operational standpoint. This is due to the fact that the environment in which people interact is structured to achieve a variety of administrative purposes, ranging from customer satisfaction to maximising the financial return of the venue or programme offered. As a result, revamping the event education curriculum in close collaboration with the industry is critical at

this time in order to place the proper focus on the numerous skill sets and knowledge as required by the industry, and in a relevant manner. Higher education institutions and businesses must form stronger alliances and collaborate more effectively to provide job-ready graduates in the post-Covid-19 environment.

Having said that, as the primary participants in the three-way relationship, students are the ones to enjoy the advantages of the practical programmes. Being technically and intellectually prepared, as well as having an appropriate degree of learner autonomy, are crucial requirements for successful practical learning programmes. Therefore, students and recent graduates must be made aware of their specific responsibility to obtain the necessary skills and actively participate in boosting their future employability.

There must also be an understanding that learning does not stop after acquiring a bachelor's or master's degree, since the complex and dynamic event environment needs continued upskilling and lifelong learning among the talents and stakeholders involved in the organisation. Students need to develop a growth mindset, where skills and mental strength are continuously honed through effort and practice, rather than having a fixed mindset, where they believe their intelligence level and skill sets are unchangeable. In having the correct mindset from the very beginning, they will be able to cultivate the passion and eagerness to improve and learn.

Students with a growth mindset see failure as a stepping stone on the path to success. Consequently, those who believe they have the potential to develop will perceive challenges and constructive criticism as opportunities to learn and improve, rather than being easily disappointed, hurt and disillusioned.

In conclusion, to comprehend how the future of education and the event industry will continue to develop, educators and industry professionals will need to remain in alignment with one another. Knowing how the job market operates, the skills students will need, and the ways in which the many education stakeholders may support students in acquiring those abilities are all part of being informed. Because they will be creating our future and carrying on our legacies, we have a duty to all students as educators and professional mentors. We must provide engaging learning experiences that will help students develop into future leaders, designers, problem solvers and innovators.

Aromatherapy at Workplace

By **BusinessToday** - November 20, 2022



Have you ever wondered why you feel relaxed and energized the moment you stepped into a spa? The reason is that spa operators know that scents can affect our mood. Previous studies suggested that up to 40% of our emotions are affected by smell and the sense of smell has a significant physiological effect on mood, stress, and working capacity.

In a recent study, Kuala Lumpur was ranked the third most overworked city while another study reported that 58% of Malaysians are feeling burned out at work. The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines burnout as “physical, emotional or mental exhaustion, accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance and negative attitudes towards oneself and others”. It was found that prolonged workplace stress can lead to burnout and is associated with numerous health issues like depression, hypertension, sleep disturbances and substance abuse. Furthermore, it can ruin and jeopardize your work and social life.

What can we do about it?

Studies suggested aromatherapy as a simple, convenient and safe method to relieve stress and is also a useful remedy for symptoms of burnout. Aromatherapy derived its name from the word aroma, which means fragrance or smell and therapy for treatment. It is one of the complementary therapies which uses essential oils extracted from plants for therapeutic benefit. According to integrative medicine specialist Dr Lin Yufang, diffusing essential oil is a great way

to change your mood quickly. She further explains that “the oil’s aroma immediately stimulates your central nervous system, triggering an emotional response as we breathe in. It can reduce anxiety and stress response quickly.”

With over 100 types of essential oils, each with its unique chemical properties providing different health benefits and unique aromas, citrus oils are known for being some of the best essential oils capable of uplifting your mood and encouraging happy thoughts. Among all, sweet orange oil is one of the most popular essential oil in aromatherapy. Its sweet and zesty scent doesn’t only create a cheerful, uplifting and refreshing environment, but it’s also very relaxing and calming. Research suggests that this oil can help to calm the heart rate and decrease levels of cortisol secretion to minimize feelings of stress and anxiety.

If you have been to any Thai or Balinese spa, you would be familiar with the lemony and calming scent of lemongrass oil. It has been widely used in traditional Thai massage for its revitalizing effect on the body and mind for centuries. It is also a folk remedy to promote sleep, relieve pain, and boost immunity. When diffused, the uplifting and energizing aroma is perfect for reducing stress, and fight exhaustion and burnout.

Research also found that peppermint oil which is commonly used for problems like headaches, muscle aches and joint pain is effective in lowering feelings of anxiety, frustration and fatigue. The minty and soothing aroma works well at waking up your brain, improving your level of concentration and increasing alertness at work.

What about lavender essential oil? One might be asking at this point. Despite studies have shown that lavender oil is effective in combating stress, and anxiety and improving sleep quality, in the workplace, however, lavender has been reported to be associated with a decrease in focus on information recall, working memory, critical thinking, reaction times for both memory and attention-based tasks. Therefore, lavender oil would be more suitable outside working hours.

Diffusing essential oils in the office is one of the easiest and most effective ways to reap the benefits of essential oils. A general best practice is to diffuse around 3 to 5 drops of essential oil per 100 ml of water in an ultrasonic diffuser. To avoid



sensitivity reaction and olfactory fatigue, intermittent diffusion of 30-60 minutes is suggested.

If a diffuser is not suitable for the office, you can also use inhalers and inhale anytime and anywhere when you need it.

So the next time when you feel stressed or tired, drop a few drops of oils into your diffuser and let it work its magic!

by Dr Jonathan Lee Chao Wei, School of Hospitality and Service Management, Sunway University

BusinessToday



Cloud Kitchen Model in Weathering the Storm of Global Inflation

By **BusinessToday** · July 10, 2022



By Associate Professor Dr Daniel Chong, Associate Dean (International) – School of Hospitality and Service Management, Sunway University

With a better understanding of the pandemic and its aftermath on global inflation, smart businesses are adapting to similar challenges in a more agile and responsive manner. As dine-in experiences gain traction, venture capitalists should keep an eye on cloud kitchens. These centralised food prep facilities, also known as “ghost kitchens,” lack a storefront and focus solely on delivery. As a result, it has a low entry cost, low rental, and requires less labour to operate. This not only reduces overhead costs, but it also removes the earnings pressure by persistent global inflation of material costs and highly appreciating physical location. Even after COVID-19, it appears that cloud kitchens will continue to grow. Looking ahead, the market is expected to be worth US\$ 112.53 billion by 2027, with a CAGR of 11.50 percent from 2022 to 2027. The key success factor, however, is to keep an eye on the following challenges:

Customers’ Acceptance and Experience

Any cloud kitchen’s success depends on consumer acceptance and approval. The cloud kitchen concept actually encourages individuals to look for little more in

food than is necessary to satiate their hunger in terms of significance, enjoyment, and feeling. When movement is under control, this phenomenon is probably readily understood, but it is challenging when things are normal. The experience economy is based on the concept of providing customers with unique experiences that go beyond simply eating food, resulting in memorable consumption. However, there aren’t many opportunities for meal delivery services to offer such a distinctive experience. Not only are creative efforts desperately needed to develop the ordering, receiving, and consuming experiences of customers, but also post-purchase engagements.

Absence of Customer Engagement

In-house dining arrangements are best suited for customer interactions and attention to their needs. Cloud restaurants must find ways to communicate clearly with their customers in order to incorporate their needs and feedback into their operations. The service provider serves as the link between the product and the customer. Gone are the days when food service providers were only concerned with providing good food and not with how the customer was treated while the product was being delivered. The cloud kitchen operator is the key person in this context, ensuring that engagement is still possible digitally throughout the purchase and delivery process.

Difficulties with Marketing and Branding

There is no brand boost from the storefront. Normally, customers are constantly reminded of physical locations, especially in high traffic areas. However, it would be difficult for Cloud Kitchen marketers to participate in a wide range of marketing and promotional activities in a number of hypercompetitive and dynamic digital markets. Additionally, consumers are becoming more inclined to value hedonic features of goods and services. However, in the absence of dining ambiance and elegant table setting, the operators of Cloud Kitchen should depend primarily on the aesthetic value of their food offerings and packaging to attract customers.

Workplace Environment and Employee Motivation

Because employees wouldn’t be engaging with clients, some staff would compare working in a cloud kitchen to working in a factory rather than the hospitality



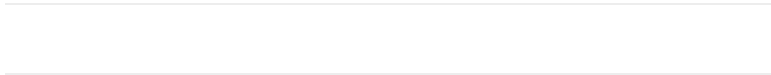
industry. Employee motivation, performance, and welfare may all suffer in a non-interactive work environment. By offering a choice of workspaces, employers can promote innovative working practises and provide employees the freedom to choose the setting that best suits their needs and the task at hand. Of course, there are other ways to boost morale and motivate people, but if important stakeholders (staff and customers) are not physically linked, developing a brand culture may be more difficult.

Limited Control Over the Delivery Process

Because all orders are take-out, cloud kitchens rely on the delivery process. Monitoring the performance of delivery personnel and the quality of the journey is difficult. Furthermore, excessive reliance on third-party delivery services results in high fees that can eat into profit margins, and you have little control over last-mile delivery, which can compromise food quality and jeopardise your brand. On-time delivery has a significant impact on customer satisfaction, and any negative delivery experience may lead to lower future ordering. Furthermore, any delivery flaw, such as a delay, incorrect quantity, or menu item, may result in order cancellation. The efficient delivery boosts the brand and boosts trust towards the cloud kitchen organisation.

Food Quality and Food Safety

Your reputation as a delivery-only food service provider depends on the food arriving in top condition. Major challenges arise while trying to maintain the food at the proper temperature so that it reaches the consumer on schedule. It should not only be the right temperature for them to enjoy it, but also be secure food safety. Priority should be given to packaging choices that ensure food safety and allow the product to withstand the conditions of delivery.



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Culture of health as a catalyst for business sustainability

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The introduction of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 saw the adoption of 17 major goals by world leaders and subsequently, the cascade of these goals into business practice. Both political as well as business leaders understand that the way forward is to ensure sustainable growth and a more green economic orientation so that future generations are assured of continuity. Sustainability has indeed been synonymous with the 21st-century ethos.

Companies and businesses have attempted to embed the SDGs into business practice but engage with the “triple bottom line” concept of people, planet and profit, where economic gains are balanced with environmental consciousness and a focus on societal well-being. The triple bottom line approach is seen as a manageable way for businesses to ensure they enjoy economic outcomes, but these are done in a way that does not undermine the well-being of society and the environment.

However, the complacency of business in attempting to pursue the triple bottom line came to a crashing halt when Covid-19 ravaged the business environment, which saw businesses having to scale back operations, cut down on human resources and essentially move to a “survival mode”. As the world is slowly taking steps back to normalcy, the concept of sustainability needs to be revisited.

An approach businesses should consider adopting is the “culture of health” (CoH) — a phenomenon advanced by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to advance health as the core aspect of human health in a diverse society. The CoH involves a four-pillar framework that examines organisational and societal well-being: employee health (the treatment of its workers), consumer health (healthfulness and safety of its products and services), community health (health and safety efforts in location of doing business) and environmental health (impact of operations on the environment).

The comprehensiveness of the CoH approach allows organisations to reframe their agendas to encompass individual, organisational and societal well-being as part of their strategic direction to align with the SDGs’ aspirations. This way forward argues for the involvement of businesses in creating a corporate “health footprint” for the betterment of businesses and society. What strategies may organisations undertake in each of the CoH areas? Some suggestions are as follows:

Consumer health strategies

Within this pillar, organisations may embark on strategies that focus on the quality of their products, from their sourcing to the final outcome. Organisations may also impact consumer health by providing full product information to ensure products are safe for consumption. The consumer health agenda may be

pushed forward through the adoption of “farm-to-table” strategies by prioritising local produce, which allows for the support of local businesses and reducing the carbon footprint from exports.

Employee health strategies

This pillar may include a wide variety of employee assistance programmes that cater for both physical and mental well-being of people at work. A good lesson taught by Covid-19 is how the issue of mental health has long been sidelined by organisations and with strategies such as work-from-home, a healthier and productive workforce has emerged. With employees being removed from what can possibly be a distracting social environment at work, they are now more able to focus on work and experience better work-life balance, which is likely to result in a happier, healthier workforce.



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Environmental health strategies

This pillar requires organisations to review the deleterious effects of their use of natural resources and production processes. The environmental strategies may be approached using two prongs: (1) the commitment to resolve existing environmental problems (for example, carbon emissions, food waste, poor management of water resources, waste disposal and other environmentally detrimental actions); (2) the commitment to adopt green practices (for example, shifting to alternative forms of energy and engaging in restorative or conservation efforts).

Community health strategies

This pillar emphasises the engagement of organisations with the local community to determine how a healthy and collaborative partnership may be

forged. Organisations may prioritise hiring locals vis-à-vis outsiders or provide educational or training assistance to build the local talent pool and potentially provide employment opportunities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has clearly shown the lapses and fragility of the global economy, and with it a sound reminder that we need to review the way we conduct business. The driver of the future of sustainability is health in its various forms, be it the health of the individual, the community, the consumer and the environment. Embracing a CoH ethos allows organisations to further the agenda of sustainability by positioning themselves to successfully manoeuvre a post-Covid-19 business landscape through the increase of business resilience, supporting health and recovering livelihoods. It is, therefore, timely that organisations start strategising ways in which they become enablers of the four pillars of health.

Note: This is a project under the Sustainable Business Cluster (Sunway University) funded by Toshiba International Foundation. The grant members include Dr Tan Ai Ling; Prof Susela Devi K Suppiah (director of the Centre for Accountability and Governance Research); Dr Sivakumari Supramaniam (Department of Marketing Strategy and Innovation); Assoc Prof Dr Alexander Trupp; Ng Siew Cheng; Vijaya Malar Arumugam (School of Hospitality and Service Management); Prof Huong, T Bui (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan); Dr K Thirumaran (James Cook University Singapore); Assoc Prof Pham Hong Long (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam) and Assoc Prof Singhanat Nomnian (Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia at Mahidol University, Thailand).

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Importance of promoting community health among SMEs in Malaysia

By Ng Siew Cheng / Sponsored Content

14 Nov 2022, 07:00 am



The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the decline of all of Malaysia's economic sectors, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The Department of Statistics, Malaysia revealed that SMEs' contribution to the nation's gross domestic product in 2021 increased by 1.0%, slower than Malaysia's GDP, which grew by 3.1%.

The pandemic has also raised global concerns about the ability of governments to continue funding the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), thus paving the way for the private sector to play a larger role in the development of SDG-related outcomes.

One effort that can be undertaken is the reframing of the SDGs through a Culture of Health (CoH). Introduced by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2013, the CoH involves a 4-pillar framework: employee health, consumer health, community health and environmental health. The CoH is an action framework that improves societal health, well-being and equity in a diverse society through four action areas: making health a shared value, fostering cross-sector collaboration, creating healthier and more equitable communities, and strengthening the integration of health systems and services. In the framework, businesses and enterprises are recommended to collaborate with local health departments and community organisations to align CoH and SDG initiatives.

Awareness of community health is continuously emerging among Malaysian SMEs, with companies identifying the three primary drivers for creating a healthier community as the built environment and physical living conditions; the social and economic environment; and policy and governance. To achieve these drivers, longer-term planning, a larger investment, knowledge and the right timing are required for effective execution.

Not all SMEs possess the specific resources, technical knowledge and know-how to implement it. Nevertheless, as a start, these companies can champion community health by undertaking corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects in their business operations. Examples of CSR engagement activities include charitable giving and volunteering, natural disaster relief, refugee upskilling, establishing food banks for marginalised and underprivileged communities, and many more.

When organising CSR engagement activities, it is important to consider the actions, policies and expectations of stakeholders and to align economic, social and environmental performance to achieve SDG goals. Based on the nature of



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their businesses and enterprises, SMEs may curate their CSR activities in relation to industries.

In Malaysia, businesses can benefit from tax deductions by donating to registered charitable organisations as announced in Budget 2020. Bursa Malaysia has also mandated all publicly listed companies to disclose their CSR initiatives in their annual reports. Indirectly, CSR projects and initiatives can help companies project a positive image and reputation, enhance brand image and increase their ability to attract and retain the best employees, thus increasing the value proposition of the organisation.

It is also an effective way to help their employees develop people skills and a community-based outreach that can benefit job performance, from enhanced project management and communication skills to employee relations and engagement. Many SMEs have increased their investment in CSR activities to fulfil their vision as well as develop successful business strategies.

Businesses and enterprises are aware that the pandemic has severely affected business activities and resulted in financial instability and business closure, to name a few issues. Furthermore, the Movement Control Orders also restricted movement and volunteering activities to those in need. As a result, SMEs have reduced or even withdrawn their CSR activities due to a shortage of resources and pressure to survive for business continuity.

Reports reveal that many welfare-based and not-for-profit organisations were forced to terminate their volunteer programmes and fundraising events due to public health and safety concerns. Thus, many organisations are running low on funds to alleviate the burden on the poor and underprivileged communities. Nevertheless, many SMEs have continued to reach out to the community and still play a role in helping many in need to overcome this difficult time.

The road to economic and social recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic is not easy. As highlighted by the recently concluded United Nations General Assembly 2022, the world is facing new social, economic and geopolitical challenges. This is the time for businesses to seize the opportunities emerging from the recovery and the uncertainties. Businesses must consider their enterprise priorities and strategic direction when formulating and implementing CSR initiatives. In the long run, SMEs are encouraged to curate their CSR strategies to be aligned with their business strategies. There is a need to set a

clear CSR vision and direction in companies, which will contribute to their achieving market growth and a sustainable business.

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Shaping the future of events with innovative ‘disruptions’

By Sponsored Content / Farah Atiqah Mohamad Noor

05 Sep 2022, 09:00 am

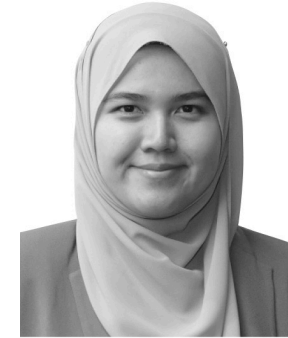


Globally, the events industry is bouncing back from the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Virtual and hybrid events acquired greater prominence following movement controls and travel restrictions that were imposed as a result of the devastating health crisis. Between 2020 and 2022, virtual and hybrid were the preferred formats for various international events.

Digital music festival Tomorrowland Around the World 2020 was a huge success, with more than a million viewers tuning in from all over the globe. In sports, the Tokyo Olympics was touted as the world’s largest hybrid event in

2021 as more than three billion spectators watched the live broadcasts, according to Olympic News.

For Malaysia, 2022 is considered a groundbreaking year for events post-pandemic, as in-person events are making an exciting comeback. In fact, the country has managed to secure 123 business events to be held between now and 2030, through the initiatives of the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau, and business associates and partners. Such an achievement is testament to the resilience of the events industry and a global collective response to mitigate the challenges of event production in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.



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With changing preferences in event production and technological support systems, experts in the events industry must take a step further to produce a sophisticated affair. Virtual or hybrid events are no longer seen as a pivoting mechanism, but as a valuable addition to boost attendance from the online community. Pre-event marketing campaigns and post-event engagements with the online community could sustain longer with the help of virtual events. In addition, event experts can objectify the role of hybrid events in combining the best elements of an in-person and a virtual event. Hybrid events could be redefined from time to time with newer technologies in hardware and software that are reshaping the events industry.

One of the most exciting updates in the industry is the emerging phenomenon of the metaverse in leisure and business events. Though the adoption of the metaverse in events is still evolving, Forbes magazine reported that the metaverse is the scaled version of multiple virtual environments and will continue to experience increased growth with observable investments by big players such as Facebook, Apple, Disney, Netflix and Nvidia.

The completely immersive experience for metaverse users is likened to playing a virtual reality (VR) or an augmented reality (AR) game personified with self-identity through customisable avatars. Avatars in the metaverse are a fun way to

promote oneself; users can choose an avatar personality that looks like them in real life or one that is completely different.

In the metaverse environment, the sky is the limit for an event organiser, notably because of the opportunity to produce immersive sub-events, interactive gamification and enhanced networking experiences. In addition, a more organic approach to branding looks promising in the metaverse environment due to the unique engagement activities with the event attendees. A higher return on investment is foreseeable for event players who can seize the earliest opportunity to redefine events with the metaverse.

The metaverse is seen as the next big thing for events, as a creative tech outlet to elevate event engagement and amplify event activities to greater heights. While technological advancements are welcomed by competitive event players, conservative players may view an advancement like the metaverse as a “disruption” to in-person events.

The argument stems from the need to focus on in-person events post-pandemic, in order to recoup the massive loss of business from event cancellations or the downsized version of in-person events experienced during the pandemic. However, event players must acknowledge that the pandemic has brought unprecedented change to the landscape of event production. The huge success of the virtual and hybrid formats of international events poses a different question in organising events: how to make in-person events better?

The answer lies in the willingness of event players to adopt innovative “disruptions” in the form of technological advancements not limited to VR, AR or 3D technology. It is time for event players to embrace the new normal of event production innovatively one step at a time.

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