

What's the reality of live events after COVID-19?

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Even months into the Covid-19 pandemic, a huge amount of uncertainty still remains whether our lives will ever fully return to how they were just several months ago.

A handful of my blogs recently have been around the events industry. This is because, alongside my internship here at the Centre for Brexit Studies, I am an Events Management student at BCU, hence why my concern for the future of the industry is huge.

There is uncertainty if live events will ever be the same again since the pandemic has created worry and doubt to audiences. From dancing in large crowds at a Michael Bublé concert to mosh pits at Glastonbury, will this ever happen again?

Throughout the media, there has been controversy whether the event industry should start back up again so soon. Unfortunately, the circumstances have left both small and large event companies bewildered with health and safety measurements at any live event implementation. Whilst many welcome back live events, especially the younger demographic, on the other hand, many older audiences are unsure about the new proposals.

Of course, there would be a completely new outlook when it comes to events now. Aspects of an event that just several months ago, an event manager would hardly even have to consider, such as the design of the event, social distancing and how many people can mix (if they can mix at all?!). The best thing about the likes of festivals, shows and live concerts allow people to let their hair down and have fun; will the implementation of mask wearing, social distancing and strict health and safety measures, take away this 'fun'? Plus, how can you apply social distancing measures after audiences have had a few to drink?!

There are numerous factors effecting the whole 'social distancing' concept at live events, so this may take a long time to implement at

the current time. Many event companies are waiting until 2021, some even 2022 to be completely safe. Some live events, such as small conferences and weddings are already taking place because they are easier to maintain and manage. Consequently, festivals and concerts are harder to operate, with large audience scales to manage.

Back at the start of August, we saw the 'UK's first socially distanced concert' (1), giving us a good idea of what the future of live music events could look like. As audiences said, the concert was well constructed and helped to bring back the festival vibes. The concert was designed so that groups of up to five could watch musician Sam Fender from one of 500 raised metal platforms at the arena in Gosforth Park, in Newcastle. Distancing was enforced on arrival, whereby cars are parked two meters apart before attendees are guided to their own platform private viewing areas, while food and drink can be ordered beforehand or via an app.

These were effective, because it meant social distancing was implemented throughout the venue, and it stopped people getting out of control. The ticket prices were slightly more expensive in order to compensate for the venue capacity being lower than usual, but still having the same outlays. Not only that, but this event structure would make it more accessible for audiences who otherwise couldn't attend for personal or health reasons. I suspect many concerts will use these ideas in the future, to sustain the events industry.

Another recent event that took place recently was 'Blenheim Palace Triathlon' event (2). Originally, this event was to take place in May, but like all other events, was postponed until now. Every aspect of the event had been scrutinised and re-evaluated, to keep the safety of participants and staff working throughout the weekend. The event overall was a great success. Even though the venue capacity was reduced, the atmosphere was still enjoyable. Prior to the event, participants were asked to complete a health and safety questionnaire to ensure they are well enough to attend. Temperature checks and cleanliness were monitored throughout the event, to ensure prevention of the spread. This allowed the event to be a great success, and gives us an idea of how more sporting events could take place in the near future.

Other successful events include the outdoor drive-in cinema venues, which have been popping up all over the country in recent months. These have allowed audiences to enjoy large screen movies from the comfort of their own vehicle. Rather than watching from home, it also allows audiences to experience a new ambience, but still abiding to the social media measures in place. This has created a new economic strategy for the industry, with tickets ranging from £15-£30.

On the other hand, some event companies are investing their time into 'online virtual events' using applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and YouTube. These have attracted a range of audiences, especially the older demographics because it means they can watch the event from the comfort of their home. Although this concept doesn't give the whole experience idea of a live event, it certainly creates another alternative to keep the event industry afloat.

Virtual platforms have allowed work conferences to take place by creating a meeting through the likes of Zoom, rather than attending at an event venue. Just like our [Annual Conference](#), taking place online in two days time!

Overall, these new ideas and concepts have allowed the events industry to build back up and attempt to carry on. Although some audiences do not prefer the proposals for live events, it still creates a sense of enjoyment for others.

The future is unknown as to whether we can return to the 'norm' again at live events, but at least for the current period, many events seem to be on the road to recovery.

1 <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/social-distanced-music-festival-intl-scli-gbr/index.html>

2 <https://www.tri247.com/triathlon-news/event-news/blenheim-palace-triathlon-2020>