Inside Asia's Virtual Events Mindset

EVENTX

Summary

When it comes to COVID-19, the narrative of most marketing industry discussions on the subject has understandably veered towards the very real negative outcomes such as cancellations, missed opportunities, and overall time wasted. Yet, as we come out of the shadow of the coronavirus, conversations are turning towards the transformed identity of the events industry and what strengths it has developed. Specifically, these relate to the rapid evolution of practitioner relationships with virtual and hybrid platforms.

When lockdowns began, a great number of uninitiated event organizers had to frantically get up to speed with bringing their in-house or client brand events online. The coronavirus lit a fire under many of Asia's brand marketers and event organizers to find new and effective methods of event management in unfamiliar digital spaces, delivering meaningful events to drive growth. At the same time, some of the more digitally acclimatized organizers adjusted to the situation easier, having already become well acquainted with online attendance and the strengths that the medium offers.

This brings us to the Summer of 2021, over a year since the first outbreak when one would assume that the playing field had balanced out. Surely a majority of organizers now possess a wealth of virtual experience and a sense of self-assurance in using virtual platforms?

We wanted to get to the root of that assumption and reveal its validity. This is why we have attempted to measure the industry's trust in virtual events, find out how confident practitioners feel running them, and reveal what elements of virtual event platforms matter to them most.

Methodology

On 25th May 2021, EventX held the *Event-Driven Growth In The Time Of COVID* webinar, which gathered regional leaders in the events industry to share their views on best practices for running events. As part of this webinar, its 239 participants were polled on four points related to their personal event practices and perceptions.
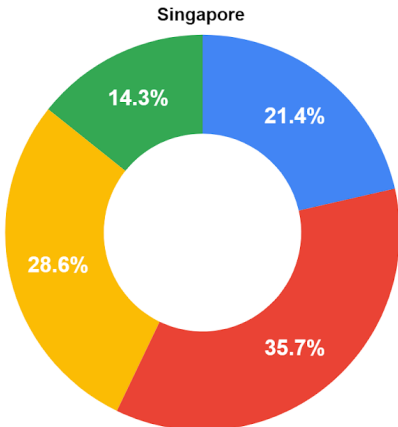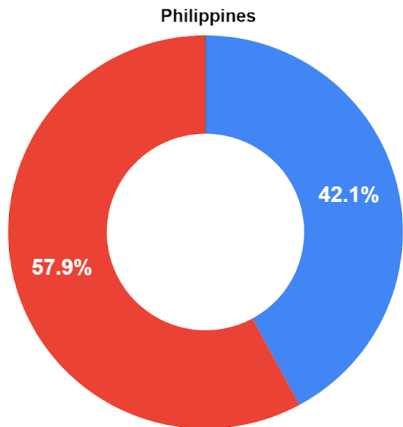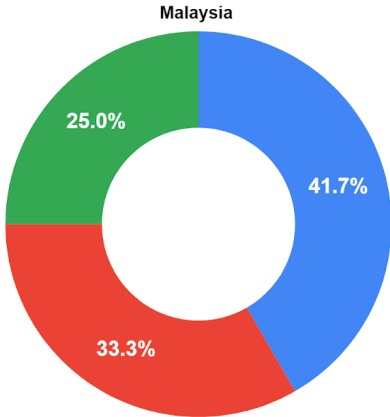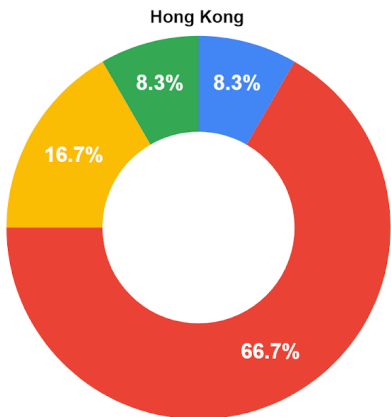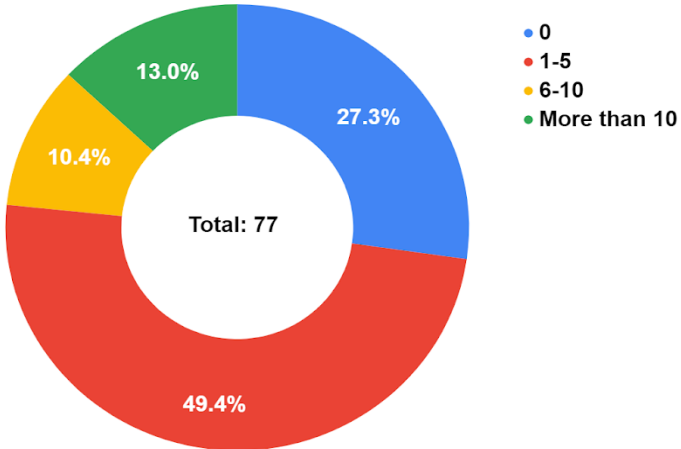
The poll questions were as follows:
- How many virtual events have you organized over the past year?
- How do you plan to allocate your events budget in the coming year?
- Which feature is the most important when you choose a platform to host virtual events?
- How would you rate your expertise at organizing virtual events?

Countries in Asia where multiple attendants had answered every question were given special attention and highlighted. This included Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

Insights

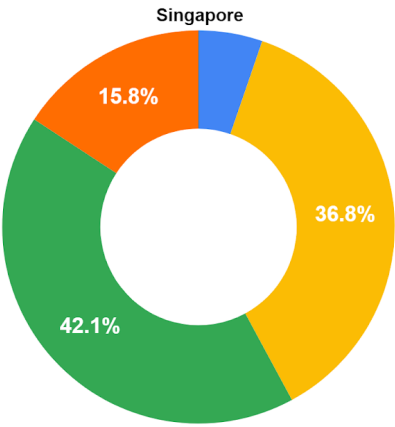## 1. How many virtual events have you organized over the past year?

Legend:
- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- More than 10

Overall (Total: 77):
- 27.3% (0)
- 49.4% (1-5)
- 10.4% (6-10)
- 13.0% (More than 10)

Hong Kong
- 8.3% (0)
- 66.7% (1-5)
- 16.7% (6-10)
- 8.3% (More than 10)

Malaysia
- 41.7% (0)
- 33.3% (1-5)
- 25.0% (More than 10)

Philippines
- 42.1% (0)
- 57.9% (1-5)

Singapore
- 21.4% (0)
- 35.7% (1-5)
- 28.6% (6-10)
- 14.3% (More than 10)

Findings

0	27.3%
1-5	49.4%
6-10	10.4%
More than 10	13%

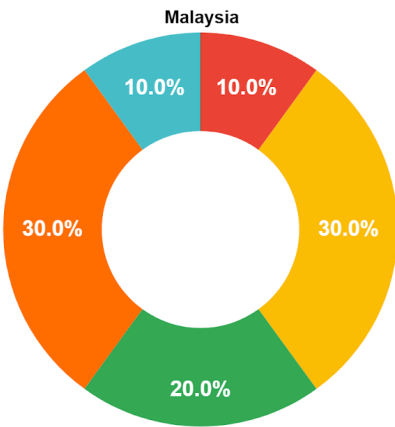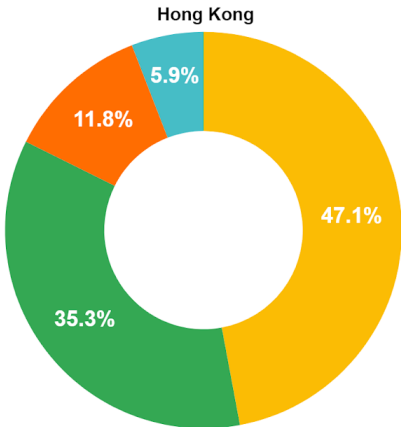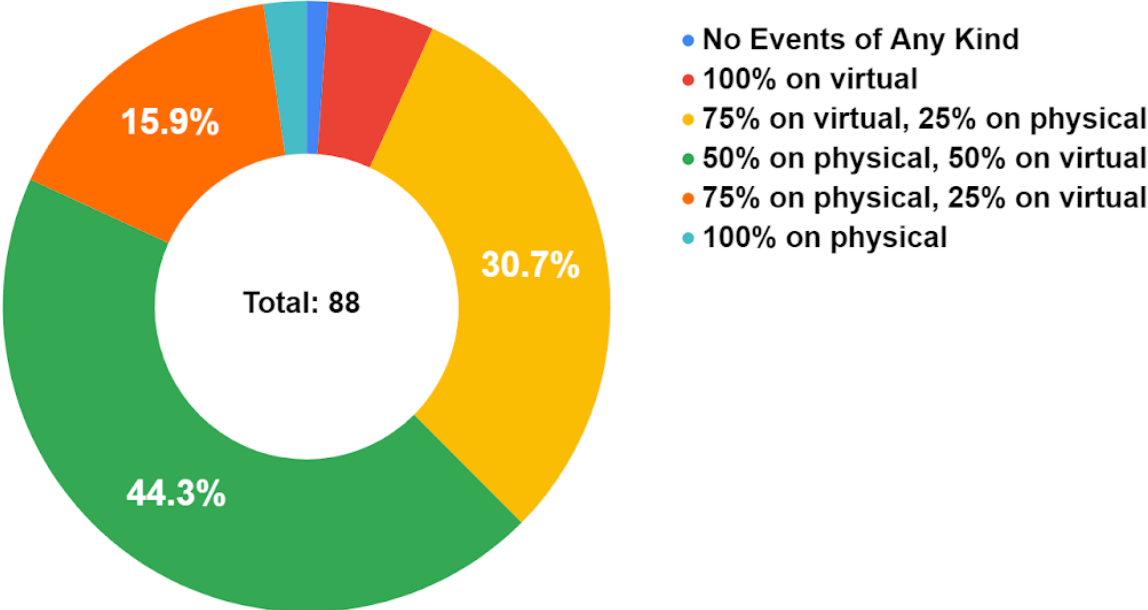Out of the 77 responses to the question, "How many virtual events have you organized over the past year?" nearly three quarters (72%) reported that they had held a virtual event of some kind, revealing it as the norm. Impressively, almost a quarter of respondents (23.4%) said they had run six or more events over the year. The largest individual share of responses — totaling almost half of those given(49.4%) — was from respondents saying they had run 1-5 virtual events in the last year.

These overall numbers were largely mirrored in Singapore and Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong was noticeably the region with the largest share of respondents (91.7%) who had held some kind of virtual event. It was also the region where the highest share of respondents (66.7%) had held 1-5 events.

In stark contrast, Malaysia and the Philippines had the greatest number of respondents who had held no virtual events at all, with that answer ranking at 41.7% and 42.1% respectively. Yet, in an interesting twist, Malaysia was also the region with the largest number of respondents (25%)who said they had held 10 or more virtual events. This could suggest that while organizers in the Philippines have a hesitancy to embrace virtual platforms (the Philippines also had zero respondents claiming to have had held six or more virtual events), Malaysian organizers are embracing more of a "go big or go home" philosophy.

2. How do you plan to allocate your events budget in the coming year?

Legend:
- No Events of Any Kind
- 100% on virtual
- 75% on virtual, 25% on physical
- 50% on physical, 50% on virtual
- 75% on physical, 25% on virtual
- 100% on physical

Total: 88
- 30.7%
- 44.3%
- 15.9%

Hong Kong
- 47.1%
- 35.3%
- 11.8%
- 5.9%

Malaysia
- 10.0%
- 10.0%
- 30.0%
- 20.0%
- 30.0%

Philippines
- 8.7%
- 26.1%
- 43.5%
- 21.7%

Singapore
- 36.8%
- 42.1%
- 15.8%

(5) **Inside Asia's Virtual Events Mindset**
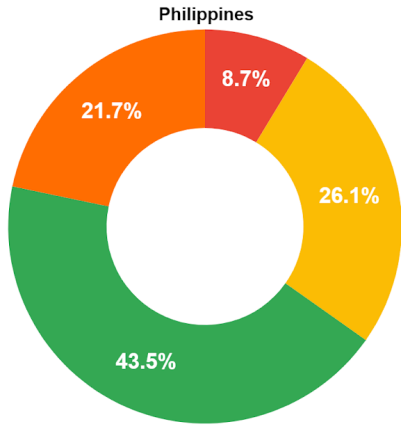
Findings:

No Events of Any Kind	1.1%
100% on Virtual	5.7%
75% on Virtual, 25% on Physical	30.7%
50% on Physical, 50% on Virtual	44.3%
75% on Physical, 25% on Virtual	15.9%
100% on Physical	2.3%

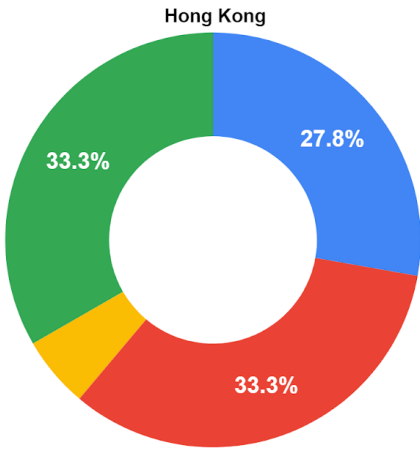Out of the 88 responses to the question, "How do you plan to allocate your events budget in the coming year?" the overwhelming majority of respondents (98.9%) stated that they planned to continue holding events of some kind in the coming year. Likewise, almost all respondents (96.6%) stated that virtual events would be part of their budget. Most (90.9%) opted for a mix of virtual and physical events with only 2.3% of respondents choosing to only hold physical events and 5.7% choosing to stick with only virtual events. Though the most popular choice (44.3%) was an even 50/50 budget split, it looks like there is a preference for virtual overall. The Virtual-to-Physical 75/25 split choice came in at 30.7%, double the number of respondents who opted for a Physical-to-Virtual 75/25 split at 15.9%.

The overall figures generally matched the results for individual territories, with there being a noticeable lean towards a balanced or slightly virtual-leading budget. However, in Hong Kong, virtual preference was much more apparent, with a Virtual-to-Physical 75/25 split being the most popular choice, taking almost half (47.1%) of all votes.

3. Which feature is the most important when you choose a platform to host virtual events?

- ● Access to specific market e.g. China
- ● Interface Design Flexibility
- ● Live Polling and Voting Solutions
- ● Networking tools
- ● Statistical Attendance Reports

Total: 101

9.9%
39.6%
12.9%
30.7%
6.9%

Hong Kong

27.8%
33.3%
33.3%

Malaysia

7.7%
46.2%
30.8%
15.4%

Philippines

48.1%
18.5%
33.3%

Singapore

10.5%
42.1%
26.3%
21.1%

(7) **Inside Asia's Virtual Events Mindset**
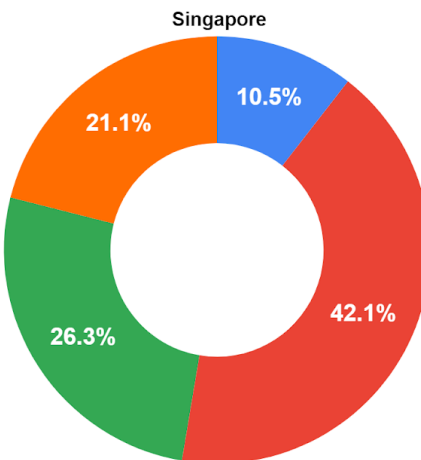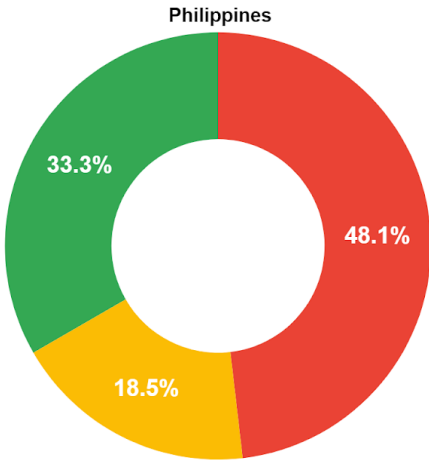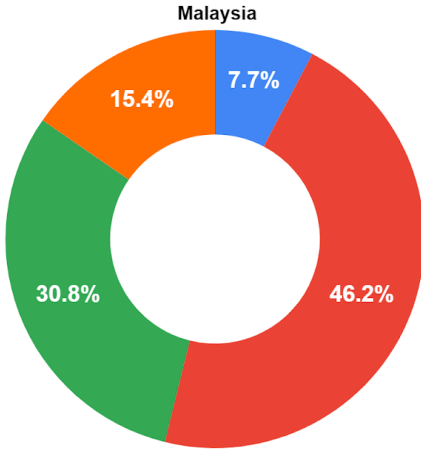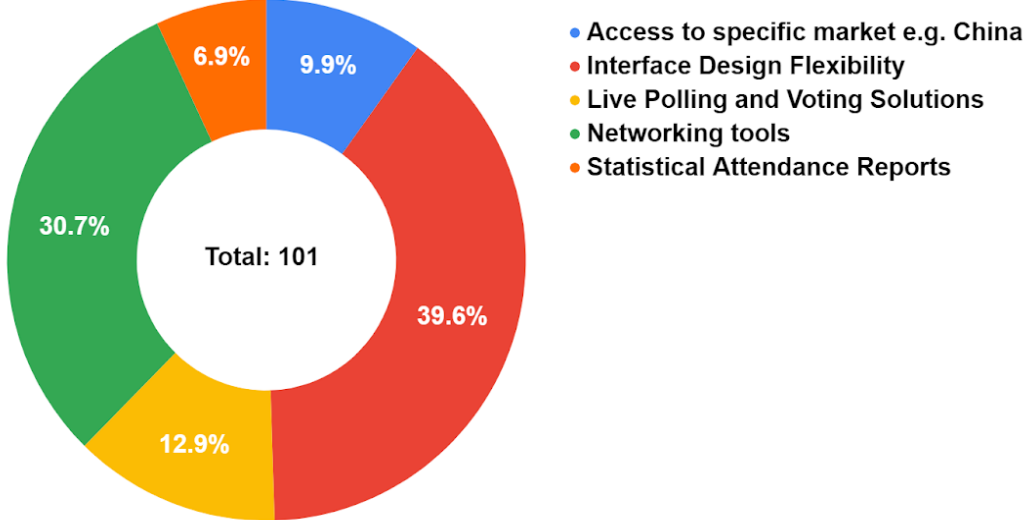
Findings:

Access to specific market e.g. China	9.9%
Interface Design Flexibility	39.6%
Live Polling and Voting Solutions	12.9%
Networking Tools	30.7%
Statistical Attendance Reports	6.9%

Out of the 101 responses to the question, "Which feature is the most important when you choose a platform to host virtual events?" the most popular answer was Interface Design 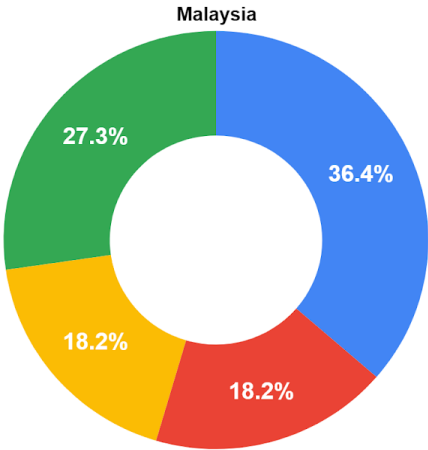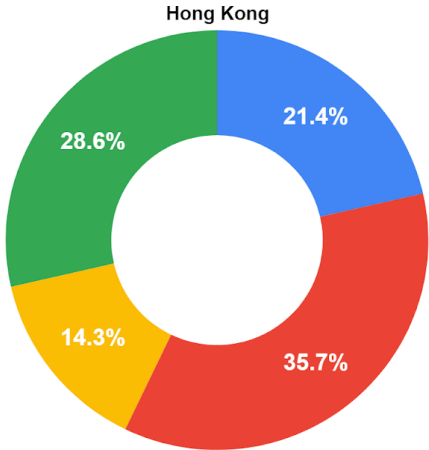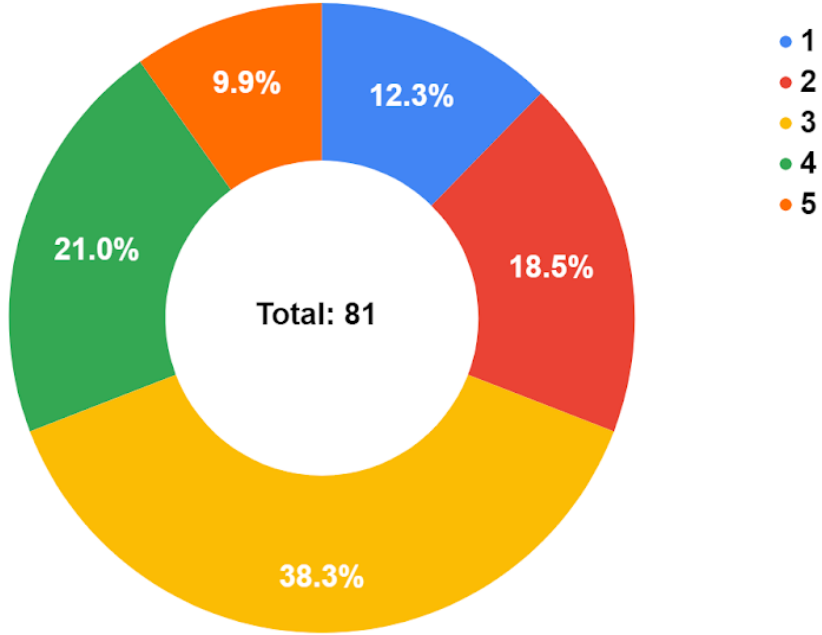Flexibility, taking over a third (39.6%) of support. Networking Tools was the only close contender, drawing 30.7% of votes. Surprisingly, even while industry mantras have long maintained that data is paramount to success, Statistical Attendance Reports was the category that drew the lowest amount of stability.

This seemingly lesser ranking of data gathering compared to other features was especially visible in the Philippines and Hong Kong, where Statistical Attendance Reports failed to draw a single vote. This is in contrast to Singapore, which was the region where Statistical Attendance Reports got its highest score of 21.1% but was still admittedly ranked third in importance.

4. How would you rate your expertise at organizing virtual events? (1=lowest, 5=highest)

Total: 81

Legend:
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Overall:
- 12.3% (1)
- 18.5% (2)
- 38.3% (3)
- 21.0% (4)
- 9.9% (5)

Hong Kong
- 21.4% (1)
- 35.7% (2)
- 14.3% (3)
- 28.6% (4)

Malaysia
- 36.4% (1)
- 18.2% (2)
- 18.2% (3)
- 27.3% (4)

Philippines
- 8.3% (1)
- 16.7% (2)
- 41.7% (3)
- 8.3% (4)
- 25.0% (5)

Singapore
- 23.5% (2)
- 58.8% (3)
- 17.6% (4)

(9) **Inside Asia's Virtual Events Mindset**
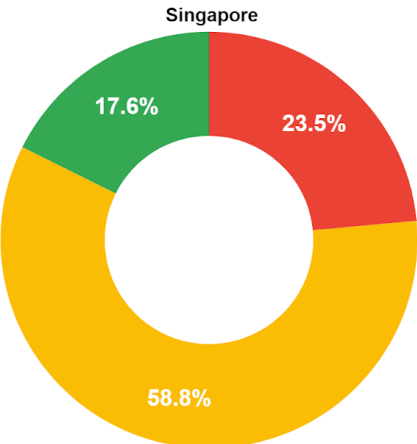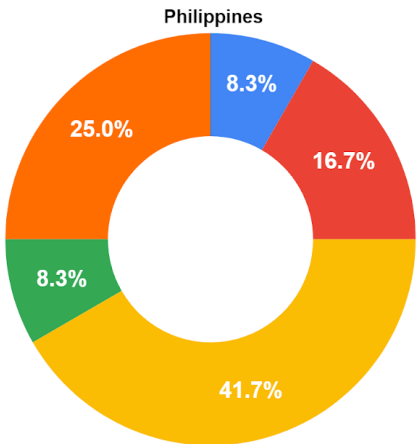
Findings:

1	12.3%
2	18.5%
3	38.3%
4	21.0%
5	9.9%

Out of the 81 responses to the question, "How would you rate your expertise at organizing virtual events? (1=lowest, 5=highest)" the majority (69.2%) reported having at least a standard or better knowledge of the medium. That confident response would seem to suggest that the last year has provided a training experience in virtual events for industry professionals. However, there is likely room for improvement as the highest-scoring (38.3%) choice was still the dead-center average rank of 3. And though around a third (30.9%) of respondents optimistically claimed they are more than qualified or even experts, that figure is almost the same as those who ranked themselves as less than qualified or totally clueless (30.8%).

By far the most confident region at organizing virtual events was the Philippines, where all of the poll's 5-rating votes came from, counting for an impressive 25% of the territory's respondents. In massive contrast, both Hong Kong and Malaysia had a low opinion of their virtual event abilities, with over half of Hongkonger (57.1%) and Malaysian (54.6%) respondents claiming less than average expertise with virtual events.

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