

tweeting #EHPSDHP

Thomas Fuller
Maastricht University

The beginning of the end of a European summer heralds the annual European Health Psychology Society conference. This year as you might know it was held in Aberdeen, Scotland. While Aberdeen might not be readily associated with beaches and fine weather like Cyprus of last year, there were actually tweets showing such scenes! The tweets including photos and videos created a fantastic impression! The cold, wet, distilled city of the winter months in my imagination was banished – well at least corrected to align with (virtual) reality.

Social media such as Twitter and Facebook is of course a great way to support colleagues and follow events and this year I was pleased to see that I was not alone in following the conference from afar. It can be used in as many different ways, for as many different purposes as there are people with accounts. While millions use social media every day, there are others who actively choose not to have an online presence, use or engage with social media at all. Others are criticised for making life look better than it really is (there is even a Wikihow page on how to do this), and yet others who seek help for problematic internet use (Kuss, 2013; Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).

Following #EHPSDHP closely, did not reveal any reasons to think that people were only tweeting about the spectacular or popular newsworthy events or research at EHPS 2016. In fact, the two most frequently retweeted tweets were by @sdrombrowskiand @FSniehotta and both were

about a major challenge for health psychology. Their respective tweets were highlighting important points made by Marie Johnston about the efforts required to advance behavioural science as well as the need and importance of being seen as a coherent discipline. Interestingly Stephan's tweet was also the third most "favourited" of the conference. Clearly (and hopefully) health psychologists attending the conference (and those out there who didn't) are up for the challenge of promoting our expertise. As researchers of health behaviours and clinicians devoted to helping people change behaviours, we should not be shy about claiming the territory in what is a crowded and competitive marketplace!

With regard to claiming the (tweeting) territory, it appears that the most active tweeters this year were far more prolific than those from last year. For example, a couple of twitter accounts - @UCLHealthPsy and @AstridCoxon - made over 90 tweets each. #prolific! (2015's top tweeter for the record made 62 tweets.) Regardless of the numbers, such activity not only demonstrates a great energy and curiosity to learn about what others are doing but a willingness to share key information with followers and those interested in the topics marked by the hashtag(s). From the tweeter's perspective it is also a great way to raise one's profile and the issues involved. In that sense it can be considered a gentle marketing or attention getting exercise. Perhaps it is something for you, your team, or department to consider in the future?

On the topic of marketing and getting messages



out to a large number of people, a few Twitter accounts tweeting from EHPS 2016 really stood out as having a particularly large reach. Of the businesses/organisations represented, Routledge Psychology (over 76,000) and BPS Official (over 41,000) had the largest number of followers, while Martin Kurth (over 63,000) was the individual with the most followers. By way of comparison though, when last checked, the EHPS account had 438, Katy Perry (singer) had over 92 million, Barack Obama had over 77 million, and NASA had over 18 million followers. While no one would reasonably expect the EHPS to reach those astronomical heights, the numbers following such Twitter accounts suggest that there is at least some room to develop the @EHPS audience further. This in turn could help convey key messages to European health psychologists as well as policy makers and the public.

I wonder though what the survey results will show about members' desire for EHPS' use of social media for communication purposes. Will there be a preference for a particular platform?

Recent reports show that overall Facebook still dominates the social media platforms with over 1.5 billion active monthly users compared to, for example, 400 million Instagram and 320 million active Twitter users respectively. The EHPS Facebook page actually already has over 1,500 "likes" which is impressive given there has not been active or ongoing efforts to promote it. Should the survey reveal that members want increased use of social media, it would seem that the potential for growth is there.

So what of the future? Now, as the summer and conference recede, hopefully the potential for implementation of ideas, research findings, and methods (such as Bayesian analysis) presented at the conference will take hold and flourish in the immediate or near future.

What can you do to make the most of the new

relationships made at the conference or, how can you actively use some of what you learned at the conference?

Why not tweet me an update of what you do as a result of the conference?

Thomas Fuller @fuller_notes

p.s. For those wondering about what were the most "favourited" tweets of the conference was... The second most "favourited" one was a tweet congratulating the organisers on a great conference. And number one had something about a group of health psychology professors taking selfies... I will leave it up to you remember the details or look up the record on the twitter feed.

Acknowledgement

Details of social media use came from a report by Smart Insights, twDocs enabled me to retrieve details of tweets from #EHSPDHP, and Twitter Counter provided the details of numbers of followers

References

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Fuller Thomas
Maastricht University

thomas.fuller@maastrichtuniversity.nl

