

SECOND CONFERENCE ON INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODS – VARNA 2017. CONFERENCE SUMMARY AND EVALUATION REPORT

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to present the process of organizing, conducting and evaluating a conference. The conference is Second conference on innovative teaching methods (<http://conf.000webhostapp.com>). The conference was organized by University of Economics Varna within the DIMBI project (www.dimbi.eu) in Swiss-Belhotel Dimyat Varna. Data for this paper is collected through an online questionnaire with 20 questions using Google forms. Using descriptive statistics and manual text mining techniques the conference evaluation report is created. The conference summary report is given in sections 1 and 2. The conference evaluation report is given in section 3.

Key words: DIMBI project, conference evaluation

1. Preparation for the conference

The 2nd conference on innovative teaching methods (<http://conf.000webhostapp.com>) was the second multiplier event within the DIMBI project (www.dimbi.eu). The conference was organized by University of Economics Varna. It was held in Swiss-Belhotel Dimyat (<http://www.swiss-belhotel.com/bg-bg/swiss-belhotel-varna>), Perla hall, on 28 and 29 June 2017. A [paper template](#) and a [flyer](#) are created and uploaded on the conference web site.

The total number of participants was 71. They were 24 foreign participants and 47 local participants (from Bulgaria). The initial project goal was to have 10 foreign participants and 40 local participants. This goal is achieved. The local participants from universities in Varna were 32. The local participants from other Bulgarian towns (Sofia, Svishtov and Shumen) were 15. Foreign participants were from Poland (Polkowice, Wroclaw, Szczecin and Katowice), India (Navi Mumbai and Ahmedabad), Romania (Sibiu and Pitesti), Ukraine (Dnipro) and Serbia (Novi Sad). The book with conference proceedings contains 39 papers written by 67 people. Some papers are written by several authors. The book with conference proceedings is 254 pages so far. The average paper length is 6.5 pages. Several papers are still expected – to pass the review process and plagiarism check and to be added to the conference proceedings.

The conference organizers received 41 papers. 2 papers are rejected. 6 papers are returned for revising due to bad style or plagiarism. The authors of these 6 papers have revised them. The papers passed again the review process and plagiarism check and they were included in the conference proceedings. 33 papers are accepted without revisions. Three people were engaged with plagiarism check and one person with the review process.

The conference proceedings are visible on the conference web site – they are published online with an ISBN. The book with conference proceedings is indexed in RePEc (<http://econpapers.repec.org/bookchap/vrndimbip/23.htm>). According to Christian Zimmermann (web master of RePEc) the page views of the conference proceedings (<http://econpapers.repec.org/bookchap/vrndimbip/>) in RePEc during June 2017 are 64. The file downloads from RePEc during June 2017 are 25. (See <http://logec.repec.org/scripts/seritemstat.pf?h=repec:vrn:dimbip>).

2. Conducting the conference

From all 71 participants: 39 people attended the conference physically, 3 people participated with posters during a poster session, 29 people participated remotely. 4 people attended the conference without participating with a paper. Members of the DIMBI project, who took part in the conference, are 3 people from University of Economics Varna, 1 person from Jan Wyzykowsky University in Polkowice and 1 person from University of Economics Wroclaw.

During the conference several coffee breaks were provided. Lunch and dinner were also provided for the conference participants. Three twin rooms were also used by conference participants coming from Sofia, Polkowice and Navi Mumbai.

3. Conference evaluation

The conference evaluation is conducted through an anonymous online questionnaire, send to 59 participants (42 local participant and 17 foreign participants). 28 answers are received. The response rate is 47%.

The conference survey was conducted after the conference (29 June – 03 July 2017). The received answers are converted into an XLSX file and after that – to a SAV file for PSPP or SPSS. Coding of variables is done. Using descriptive statistics several tables with aggregated data are created. Conference satisfaction is measured with questions Q1-Q12 (table 1).

Table 1.

Results of the questions concerning conference satisfaction (Q1-Q12)

Questions	Given answers (in %)				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
Q1. I am satisfied with the conference as a whole	0.0	0.0	3.6	25.0	71.4
Q2. I had time to look at the conference proceedings before the conference	0.0	3.6	3.6	28.6	64.3
Q3. Some papers in the conference proceedings attracted my attention. I plan to contact the authors of these papers.	0.0	0.0	10.7	35.7	53.6
Q4. The event met my expectations.	0.0	0.0	3.6	28.6	67.9
Q5. The conference program was well organized.	0.0	0.0	3.6	17.9	78.6
Q6. The event was well prepared.	0.0	0.0	3.6	21.4	75.0
Q7. The organisers were helpful.	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	85.7
Q8. The atmosphere was friendly.	0.0	0.0	3.6	17.9	78.6
Q9. We had a chance for remote participation in the conference.	0.0	0.0	14.3	25.0	60.7
Q10. I extended my knowledge in innovative teaching methods.	0.0	0.0	3.6	28.6	67.9
Q11. The conference web site was useful.	0.0	0.0	10.7	14.3	75.0
Q12. The catering during the conference was OK.	0.0	0.0	3.6	10.7	85.7

Source: Own calculations in PSPP

71.4% of all respondents are satisfied with the conference as a whole. The conference satisfaction in different dimensions is measured with questions Q2 to Q12. 64.3% of the respondents had time to look at the conference proceedings before the conference. 53.6% of the respondents plan to contact the authors of some of the read papers because they attracted their attention. 67.9% of the respondents strongly agree that the event met their expectations. 78.6% of the respondents strongly agree that the conference program was well organized. 75% of the respondents strongly agree that the conference was well prepared. 85.7% of the respondents strongly agree that the organizers were helpful. 78.6% of the respondents strongly agree that the atmosphere was friendly. 60.7% of the respondents strongly agree that they had a chance for remote participation. 67.9% of the respondents strongly agree that they extended their knowledge in innovative teaching methods. 75% of the respondents strongly agree that the conference web site was useful. 85.7% of the respondents strongly agree that the catering during the conference was OK.

Respondents were asked the possible reasons for attending the conference. They had a chance to mark more than one reason (table 2).

Table 2.

Results of the questions concerning the reasons for attending the conference
 (Q13.1-Q13.5)

Questions	Given answers (in %)	
	The option is checked	The option is not checked
Q13.1. The conference proceedings are indexed in RePEc	71.4	28.6
Q13.2. There is no conference fee	50.0	50.0
Q13.3. The conference is in Varna	60.7	39.3
Q13.4. I have the opportunity to meet new colleagues	67.9	32.1
Q13.5. I have the opportunity to exchange ideas	82.1	17.9

The strongest reason for attending the conference was the opportunity to exchange ideas. This reason is followed by the fact that the conference proceedings are indexed in RePEc. Almost 2/3 of the respondents attended the conference because of meeting new colleagues. The absence of a conference fee was not a strong reason for attending it.

Since respondents had the chance to mark several reasons, the number of reasons is aggregated by the number of respondents (table 3).

Table 3.

Results of the questions concerning the reasons for attending the conference

Count of reasons to attend the conference	Number of respondents
1 (one reason was marked)	6
2 (two reasons were marked)	3
3 (three reasons were marked)	4
4 (four reasons were marked)	6
5 (five reasons were marked)	9
Total	28

Q14 is an open text question “If you have recommendations to the conference organizers, please, write them here”. Three people said that they do not have any recommendations. Five people wrote: “should be continued”, “Well done!”, “Keep doing the great job!!!”, “When will be the next conference?”, “I am interested in the organizers' research”. 20 people did not give any recommendations.

Q15 is oriented to checking if the participant is “local” (from Bulgaria) or “foreign” (from abroad). 82.1% of the respondents are “local”. 17.9% of the respondents are “foreign”. The ratio between local and foreign participants in the respondents (n=28) is $23/5 = 4.60$. The ratio between local and foreign participants in the population (N=71) is $47/24 = 1.96$. Local participants were more active in filling in the survey. One of the possible reasons for this discrepancy was the fact that several papers from foreign participants were sent to the organizing committee after finishing the conference evaluation survey period (29 June – 03 July 2017).

Q16 is oriented to the preferences of people to participate in a conference – to attend physically or to participate remotely. 82.1% of the respondents prefer „to attend a conference“. 17.9% of the respondents prefer „to participate remotely“.

Q17 is about the review process and plagiarism check. 67.9% of the respondents said that their paper was „accepted without revisions“. 21.4% of the respondents said that their paper was „accepted with minor revisions“. 10.7% of the respondents did not answer this question.

Q18 is “How did you hear about the conference?” – a question with multiple choice answers. The aggregated results are given in table 4.

Table 4.

Aggregated results on question Q18 about the conference invitation

Types of conference invitation	Percent
Conference web site; e-mail from colleagues	3.6
E-mail from colleagues	39.3
Personal invitation	42.9
Personal invitation, conference flyer, conference web site	3.6
Personal invitation, conference web site	3.6
Personal invitation, e-mail from colleagues	3.6
No answer	3.6
Total	100.0

Informing researchers about the conference was done using several methods. The most useful one was “personal invitation”.

Q19 is “What was the most useful aspect of this conference?”. 57.1% of the respondents gave an answer to this question. 42.9% of the respondents did not answer it. Several respondents wrote “meeting colleagues”, “exchanging ideas”, “exchanging useful ideas”, „knowledge exchange“, “internationalization”. Other participants answered “collaboration with participants”, “international participants”, “relationship between academic participants and different views in scientific area”, „KISS (keep it simple and small) approach, thus – very useful“, „new experience for me presenting in English“.

Q20 is about gender. 50.0% of the respondents are male, 42.9% – female, 7.1% – did not answer this question.

4. Conclusion

The second conference on innovative teaching methods (ITM 2017) was well prepared and well organized according to the opinions of conference participants. The conference met their expectations. Most of them strongly agree that they are satisfied from the event.

The results in this study are based mainly on descriptive statistics using the answers of a conference evaluation survey. Future research may focus on creating cross-tables using the same answers.

The underlying structure of the conference satisfaction scale may be measured by factor analysis (principal component analysis – PCA). The PCA is not suitable for our dataset because there should be 150+ cases. But PCA may be useful for bigger conferences.