

## Shifting Trend on Management Event during the Pandemic

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**Abstract:** The shift in trends in organizing MICE events which are conventionally known as mass gathering activities and as a result of the pandemic there have been changes. This already happened in all countries in the world which then responded with various policies to maintain business sustainability despite being pessimistic. Stakeholders are hesitant in changing the paradigm of MICE activities from conventional models to virtual or hybrid models. This doubt is caused by the advantages and disadvantages of each type of event which will most likely reduce business profits. A simple literature review known as feature selection is used to find answers to this problem. Based on the analysis it was found that event activities are now popular in virtual and hybrid ways. Both virtual and hybrid events have changed the conventional perspective of understanding events. Although the implementation is simpler, the two events have a smaller economic impact compared to regular events that were popular in the pre-pandemic era. This paper also tries to find case studies in several countries that have successfully organized MICE events during the pandemic. In the end, a new taxonomy of event management emerged, namely original (regular) events, virtual events, and hybrid events. This change in the landscape of organizing MICE events will be an important consideration for MICE business people who may experience stagnation in recent times due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** MICE, Event, Virtual, Hybrid, Original

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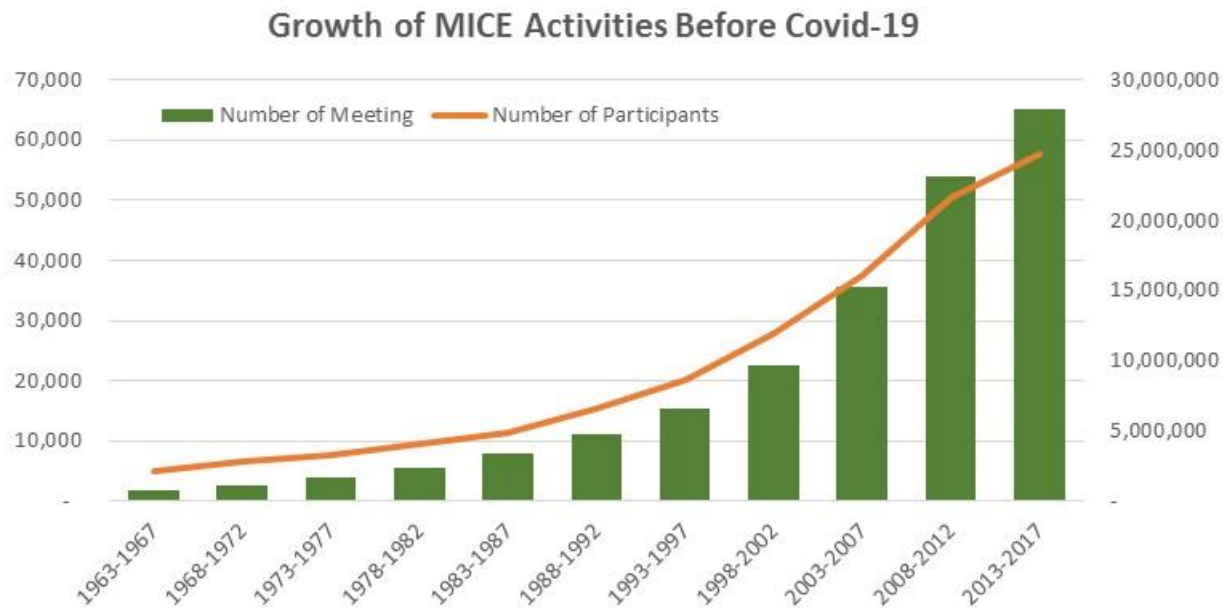
### Introduction

MICE is an abbreviation of the word Meeting Incentive Conference Exhibition which historically was often referred to as the 'meeting industry' but because these meeting activities became more complex then the term MICE developed (Iccaworld, 2021). MICE accommodates all forms of event activities. By definition, MICE is also defined as an activity that combines business activities and travel activities. Business as the main activity in the form of meetings, incentive trips, conferences, as well as exhibitions or other forms of events, but in it involves a lot of tourism infrastructure and tourism activities. MICE itself then does not only cover what is implied in its meaning as a formal meeting activity, but includes various ceremonial activities that involve many people such as product launching, awarding, sport competition, training, and so on (Getz & Page, 2016).

According to ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) data which has evaluated the growth of the MICE business from 1963 to 2017, it is known that the growth rate of MICE is very significant based on the number of meetings held around the world. If during the period 1963-1967 the number of meetings was 1,718 meetings, with approximately 2.2 million delegates, then in 2017 the number of meetings had grown to reach 65,182 meetings with more than 24.7 million delegates. This data shows that the growth of the MICE industry is very high, reaching an average of 30% growth per year.

So, how is the development of MICE after the Covid-19 outbreak around the world in early 2020?. Not only the MICE business sector contracted and even collapsed, but many other

potential economic and tourism sectors as well as other business sectors outside of that are getting bankrupt. According to UNWTO (United Nation World Tourism Organization), the number of international tourist trips, which was originally at 1.3 billion and is expected to reach 1.6 billion trips in 2020, suddenly declined significantly with a growth of (-) 96.9% from the end of 2020. Travel in various regions of the world fell down with (-)102.4% growth in Asia Pacific, (-) 97.5% in Europe, (-)89.6% in America, (-) 92.1% in Africa and the Middle East (UNWTO, 2021). In other words, during the pandemic there were almost no tourist trips between countries.



(Source : based on data ICCA (Iccaworld, 2021))

**Figure.1** The Growth of International MICE Activities Before Pandemic Covid-19

There are many things that must be responded quickly related to the MICE industry policy from conventional models to virtual and hybrid models. This is quite worrying for MICE stakeholders where investment is needed to be able to support the policy. According (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021) to among the most important is technology investment which requires quite a large amount of money as is the case in South Africa.

In another study, it was stated that the events of interest were events that were held outdoors such as gatherings or other hobby event models such as adventure for car clubs compared to participating in events that were at risk of Covid-19 transmission, such as seminars or the like (Ullah, Iqbal, & Gill, 2021).

According to (Rwigema & Celestin, 2020) who conducted research on the impact of the pandemic on people's interest in participating in events, found that around 62% of participants chose virtual events as an alternative for reasons of health risks. In another case in Sri Lanka as mentioned in the study from (R. Ranasinghe, Damunupola, & Wijesundara, 2020) hstates that MICE and related industries such as hotels and transportation are collapsing. The social distancing policy has turned MICE into a completely collapsing business. Event activities involving groups of people are something that most people fear, especially those who have to travel to other areas (Ukhina et al., 2021)

Assuming to those conditions, MICE can certainly experience the same contraction as other business sectors, due to the cancellation of a number of events, delays, or then a lot of things being diverted in its implementation. This condition has made the MICE business having

the significant changes in maintaining its sustainability. This paper is a literature review that will discuss the development of MICE during the pandemic, especially changes in the implementation of MICE events as a strategic response from the industry to maintain the sustainability of MICE business. The aim is to get an overview of the situation and the new landscape of the MICE business in the world and its trends in line with the efforts of various countries in the world including to find a balance between the need to continue business and accommodate health issues due to the pandemic. One of the most important things is how to recognize the characteristics of each typical event with its advantages and disadvantages, and how technology plays a role in this.

## Methodology

This research is a literature review or can also be referred to as desk research. According to (Snyder, 2019) This method is quite reliable in revealing a number of facts and data, although it also has a number of weaknesses because it relies heavily on the reviewer's ability to synthesize the analysis. The literature review method is also considered quite sophisticated in presenting the facts of research results using meta-analysis techniques by summarizing a number of similar research results (Davis, Mengersen, Bennett, & Mazerolle, 2014).

Metode review yang akan digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah literature review yang didapatkan dari sumber-sumber data base seperti journal, karena berbagai keterbatasan sumberdata yang digunakan untuk mendapatkan sumberdaya jurnal yang dinilai relevan adalah google scholar. Kata kunci yang digunakan adalah 'events and MICE activities during Covid-19 outbreak', and 'MICE events and pandemic'. Reduksi dilakukan dengan cara mereview tiap article yang paling relevan dengan topic yang akan dibahas pada 200 jurnal terkait yang ditemukan pada google scholar (year 2020 – early 2022).

In addition, in this paper, the analysis will also be supported based on news releases, cases and publication results from market intelligence websites that are concerned with MICE activities during the pandemic. Thus, data observation other than using literature books is an e-survey to get the latest issues and information on MICE developments. Its also to support the analysis and synthesis of data related to the description of the current MICE situation and condition.

Various systematic ways may be carried out in a study based on the review method or popularly known as the study of literature. This paper only applies a simple systematic review model by doing data reduction and only taking samples that are truly relevant which are called feature selection (FS) models (Gnana, Balamurugan, & Leavline, 2016; Jović, Brkić, & Bogunović, 2015).

## Results and Discussions

### Result

Rapid changes in an effort to respond to the pandemic, have resulted in a new format in organizing events and causing a shift in organizing the event. Currently, there is a new model for organizing events, namely virtual events and hybrid events (Irish, 2020). Original events are starting to be abandoned or rather less attractive. Of course, each type of event has advantages and disadvantages. Based on a number of data releases and experiences reviewed by event observers, virtual and hybrid types are the types of events that will trend in the future. Small-scale events will tend to prefer virtual while large-scale events may prefer hybrid. (Olson, 2020) The following is a list of reviewed research based on interest in participating in the event:

**Table.1** Research Review Based on Participants Preference to Attend of Events

	<b>Author (Year)</b>	<b>Participants Preference To Attend on Events During Covid-19 Outbreak</b>
1	(Ulak, 2020)	Stay at home, Digital Platform (Virtual)
2	(Mohanty, Hassan, & Ekis, 2020)	mobile and Web-based (Virtual)
3	(Ho & Sia, 2020)	Virtual Platform, Offline for limited events
4	(Irish, 2020)	Virtual Events, Hybrid Events
5	(Olson, 2020)	Virtual Events, Hybrid Events
6	(Mansfield, 2020)	Hybrid Events
7	(Talantis, Shin, & Severt, 2020)	Virtual Events
8	(Young, Maxwell, Pee, & L, 2021)	Hybrid Events
9	(Yao, Pang, Zhang, Wang, & Huang, 2021)	Virtual Events
10	(Kusumawardani, Afrilinda, Komalasari, & Goenadhi, 2022)	Offline (Original Events)
11	(Bartis, Hufkie, & Moralad, 2021)	Virtual Events, Hybrid Events

The consumer choices as described in table 1 above show that the options for joining the current event must vary according to the expectations of potential participants. So what are the advantages and disadvantages of each choice of participation methods? The following will describe the characteristics of each type of event that consumers expect in the current pandemic season:

### *Virtual Event (Online)*

A virtual event is an event that is predicted to experience an increasing trend both in terms of participant interest and event organizers. More than 70% of participants really look forward to this event, and more than 90% of event organizers want to be able to hold this type of virtual event (Ho & Sia, 2020; Mohanty et al., 2020; Olson, 2020; Ulak, 2020). However, this event certainly has the characteristics of advantages and disadvantages, which can at least be described as follows:

The advantages of virtual events :

- a) Practically requires only a simpler preparation than the original event or the hybrid type.
- b) The average promotion only takes 2 – 4 weeks
- c) Cheap in terms of implementation and participation costs
- d) Wider in reaching market share around the world
- e) It is ideal as an event model during the pandemic because there is no direct contact between participants and the organizers
- f) Easy to take advantage of advances in hardware and software technology that supports the implementation of virtual events becomes very easy
- g) Allows to involve a large number of participants

The disadvantages of this type of virtual event :

- a) Lack of economic impact, the benefit only limited to the organizers, less impact on the wider community
- b) Lack of employment and job creation
- c) Less humanistic values, because there is no direct contact or meeting that allows exchanging information between participants
- d) Limited human resources in the habit of using hardware and application platform events, sometimes short training is needed for potential performers or participants
- e) Technical issues (especially network quality)
- f) Time must be short and effective, it will be boring if it takes too long
- g) Many complain that often in conference or seminar events, participants' questions are not answered due to various limitations (time, network, too many participants asking questions)

- h) A number of participants' interests are not accommodated, for example in the moment of transaction while buyer meet seller (table top meeting).

### *Hybrid Event (Both Offline and Online At Once)*

The thing that is considered difficult by MICE actors is how to find a balance point between the economy and health issues related to organizing events during a pandemic (Mansfield, 2020; Young et al., 2021). Of course, MICE business actors still want their business to run even with a number of limitations, but on the other hand they also have to think about how to carry out an event while ensuring the health of participants. According to (Posch, 2020) one of the promising formats is a hybrid concept which in addition to the values that can be obtained by participants, also promises a greater ROI (Return on Investment) in the long term. The cost of this event can be equated with the original event type.

The type of hybrid event is an event that combines the two types of events above, namely offline and online. Participants who attend are generally fewer and are intended for those who are close to the location, while general participants from outside the region or abroad can simply attend online (Talanta et al., 2020). This typical event is quite attractive to consumers based on surveyed from 3,167 respondents that there are about 57% of participants who hope to attend in person (Bartis et al., 2021; Irish, 2020).

Some of the advantages of hybrid events are :

- a) Provide a complete experience for participants, especially those who attend directly related to the experience and satisfaction of the event (venue, host, food/beverage)
- b) Participants have alternative choices in terms of price and participation method
- c) Some organizers say this type is more promising in terms of business profits (return on investment), especially for the type of business to business event
- d) Higher economic impact than virtual events because there are participants who stay and spend their money.

The disadvantages of the hybrid event type are:

- a) The number of offline participants is limited, the experience of successful countries with this event is on average less than 100 people who can attend
- b) Higher risk of getting infection of Covid-19
- c) It is necessary to apply very strict health protocols for offline participants (some countries apply mandatory swab tests, vaccine cards, or even the type of PCR test that is considered more accurate)
- d) Need to prepare a representative place and arrange according to health protocols
- e) Other supporting logistics that must be provided by the organizer at the activity location
- f) The price is slightly higher than the virtual event
- g) Longer and more complex preparations besides preparing for online participants must also prepare for offline participants

### *Original Event (Offline)*

Original event is a type of event that has been popular and commonly known in the world of events or various other MICE activities. This event will seem to be trending again in the future. This event has a number of criteria as follows:

- a) Come to the location and meet directly between participants
- b) There is close communication and contact between participants
- c) Activities in the form of gathering people in large numbers
- d) It feels more humane, apart from meeting and direct contact between participants, there are also other hospitality services
- e) More interactive
- f) Minimal use of technology and prioritizes direct communication
- g) More activities that can involve all participants
- h) Broad economic impact because participants come directly, stay and shop
- i) Able to stimulate the development of a destination
- j) Direct marketing of tourism destinations

- k) The quality of service that can be directly felt by participants
- l) Absorb a lot of labor
- m) Intensive involvement of vendors/event support service providers

However, the original event also has some drawbacks, such as :

- a) The possibility of many complaints if the quality of service is bad
- b) Requires more mature preparation in terms of time, event concept, place, and other logistics.
- c) Tend to be high cost
- d) Preparation is quite long ranging from 3 months to 6 months even 1 year or more
- e) Involvement of many parties with the potential for conflict
- f) Management of permits with different procedures in each place
- g) Difficult to implement during a pandemic due to health protocol limitations

Chances are, this kind of event will be more difficult to carry out and very few interested consumers (Olson, 2020; Ulak, 2020; Yao et al., 2021). The event is only possible with a very limited number of participants, for example less than 100 people and requires a large space, assuming each person needs 2 square meters of space in a distancing situation.

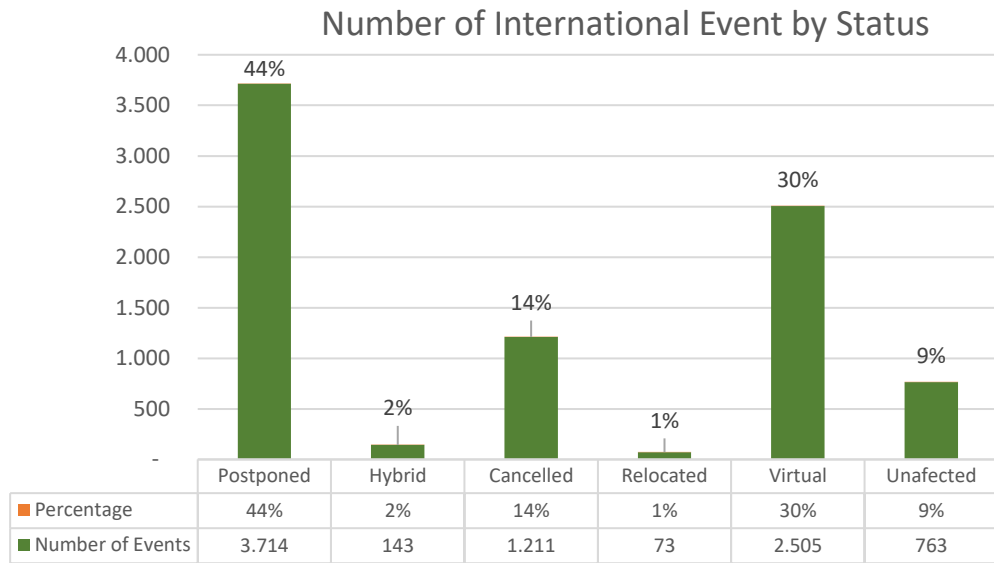
## Discussion

### *MICE Before and After Pandemic Covid-19*

ICCA stated that of the planned 13,252 events in 2020, only 4,843 were achieved. This condition caused losses estimated at 3.95 billion dollars. This is of course very detrimental not only to the organizers and prospective delegates, but also other related parties who support it. Based on ICCA data recording as a result of this pandemic, the total number of postponed world events reached 44%, canceled events reached 14%, virtual events were 30%, hybrid events (online-offline) were 2% and those that are still being held the same as the original plan (not affected) by 9%. (see Figure 2.)

This condition has then completely changed the taxonomy of MICE activities, which was originally conceptualized as an activity of gathering a number of people in one place (Trišić & Arsenov-Bojović, 2018) now cannot be carried out as before because of health protocol rules that must be obeyed. Alternative options that can be done are to be canceled, postponed, or continue to be carried out with a number of conditions. For events that are still running, you have the choice of being held face-to-face or direct arrival (as an original event), events that are carried out using a combined online and offline method (hybrid event), and events that are fully implemented face-to-face virtually (virtual event). This situation is currently happening in all forms and concepts of events in various countries as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mohanty et al., 2020).

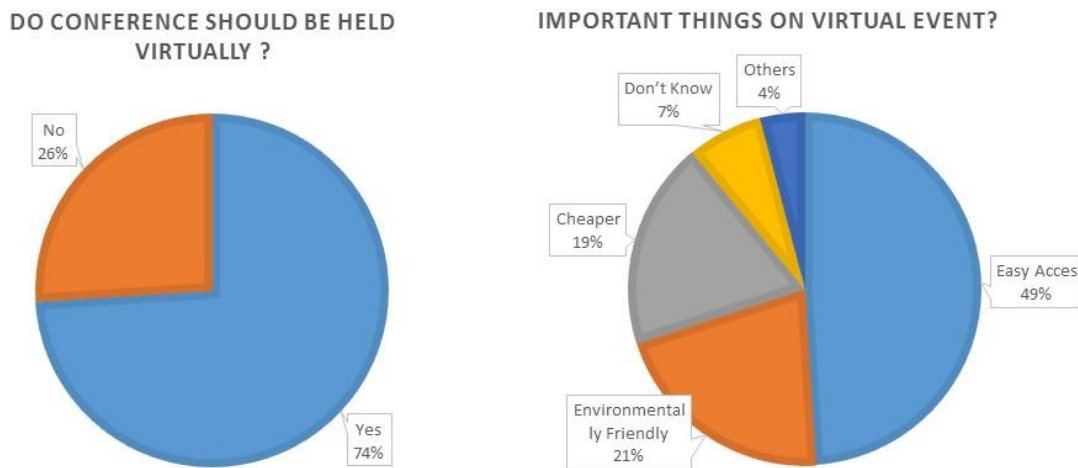
A survey conducted by the international survey agency 'Nature' on 925 academics who have experience attending virtual meetings stated that they would still choose virtual conferences compared to conventional (original) and hybrid conferences (Rommel, 2021). This further confirms that the MICE landscape can no longer be expected as before, but continues to adapt in line with the pandemic policies implemented in each country. People no longer have a strong orientation to follow the old method or face-to-face events. The advantage of this type of event is that it is easy to carry out and can be accessed from anywhere. (see Figure 3).



(Source : based on data ICCA (Iccaworld, 2021))

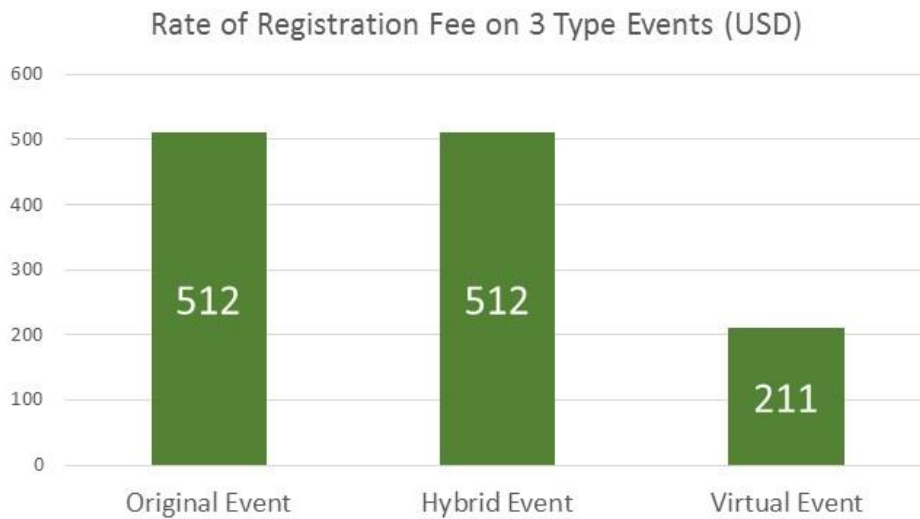
**Figure.2** Number of International MICE Event by Status Along The Pandemic Covid-19

However, ICCA's review states that virtual type events have a much lower economic impact than conventional events that have been known so far. The simplest economic impact can be seen from the cheaper registration fee for each participant, besides that there is no travel to the destination, no use of tourism facilities such as accommodation, and no travel activities. (see Figure 4).



(Source : based on survey from 925 scientists who involved on many virtual events)

**Figure.3** Survey Results That Virtual Events More Interesting



(Source : based on data ICCA (Iccaworld, 2021))

**Figure.4** Lower Economic Impact Show by Registration Fee Per Participants

The postponement and cancellation of international strategic events has become hot news throughout 2020, such as a number of UN-initiated meetings around the world such as UN Climate Change, High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, UN Conference of The Least Development Countries (LDCs), World Bank and IMF Serial Meetings, UN Economic Social Council, UN General Assembly (UNGA) are a number of important world-class meetings which were later turned into virtual meetings.

In Indonesia, MICE losses caused by Covid, especially in exhibition activities, were stated by the Indonesian Exhibition Association (ASPERAPI) to reach 44.3 trillion rupiah (Sasongko, 2020). Some of the activities carried out were eventually canceled and some were carried out virtually. The number of losses from other types of MICE events other than exhibitions has not been identified yet.

### *Technologi Plays Important Role*

Based on the facts above, it can be predicted that the MICE segmentation will change significantly. The conventional event segment has decreased a lot, while the virtual event enthusiasts have increased sharply. Of course this will be a challenge for the organizers of MICE activities. The prohibition of massive gathering of people and rules related to strict health protocols have caused the role of technology to become very important in supporting the implementation of MICE activities. Organizing virtual events and hybrid events is something that many event organizers think about at this time. How can then maximize the use of technology so that MICE activities continue to run well.

In the early 1990s, technology in tourism was still considered impossible to meet the needs of an event. Conventional event organizing is considered to be the most valuable thing, especially if it is associated with the motivation of most of the event participants to travel apart from focusing on business. (Buhalis, 2000) previously revealed how technology is an important part in improving tourism performance and connecting people around the world virtually. In another study, it was also stated that technology will one day have a dominant role in the future tourism industry (Buhalis, 2001; Casanova, Kim, & Morrison, 2008; Choi & Dattilo, 2016; Mohanty et al., 2020; Ulak, 2020). This shows that the prediction of technological dominance is not a new thing in tourism, including MICE activities. However, in the current pandemic era, technology has accelerated in utilization with the development of very revolutionary features. A number of virtual event platforms were then created by software vendors around the world and were quickly embraced by the event market share.



Repeating what (Rommel, 2021) said that the current trend that about 74% of people prefer virtual events compared to attending in person, also quoting from a statement released by (Olson, 2020; Young et al., 2021) stated that 93% of business actors in the event sector will prioritize virtual events in the future. It is in the corridor of this kind of event that the need for and mastery of technology is very important. This does not mean that it is easy to organize virtual events even though technology is increasingly sophisticated. Many non-technical things have to be prepared by event organizers, from choosing the software platform to be used, training potential speakers with the platform used, and strategies to stimulate the enthusiasm of the participants so they don't get bored during the event.

In addition, there are requirements that must be met at least 40% of participants are 'must' live during the session (Irish, 2020), so that the event becomes more 'lively.' As a consequence, the committee must always be pro-active in monitoring the participants. The advantage or convenience of organizing virtual events is that it does not require a long preparation because it does not require venues and venue settings as well as supporting programs, so that preparation time and event activities are more effective and efficient.

### *Some Success Stories As Comparison*

At the 'Meet Japan' event (JME, 2021), a very strategic regular event from the Japan National Tourism Organization and has been held since 1989, in 2021 it will hold the first time in the form of a virtual meeting. This event can be successful and even still get the support of a number of sponsors, another interesting thing is the provision of an online city tours program by sending a seminar kit before the time of implementation so that it can be a promotional tool for related parties. The online city tour program is a documentary show that updates the conditions in Japan and its attractions so that in the future participants will still have enthusiasm to visit Japan.

On another occasion in The Global Forum for Young Leaders event which was also held in Japan using a hybrid method, it was said that it required at least 6 months of preparation. The event was attended by 390 delegates from 46 countries. What organizers find difficult is managing offline attendance considering the number of participants and health protocols. There are approximately 20% of participants who attend offline, especially those who live close to the implementation location. In Singapore, the event can be implemented by following the regulations set by the Singapore Tourism Board with Safe Management Measures (SMMs) by limiting the maximum number of participants to 100 if the event is held offline and a swab test is required during the event (Singapore Tourism Board, 2021). Restrictions are also imposed during the event for all participants, such as a maximum meal time of 1 hour, with packaged and ready-to-eat food, and no coffee break. For each event, the organizer must register in advance to get a permit. This rule was adhered to and several events that took place were considered quite successful.

An event held in Miami, United States of America The Aesthetic Meeting in May 2021 is another example of a hybrid event that is considered quite successful with 714 meeting participants from 119 companies, and 972 exhibitors involved in this activity. Very strict health protocols are applied in this event. The interesting thing is that the fees charged for participants who attend in person or online are the same, the consideration is that participants can easily switch if they want from online to offline or vice versa.

A recent study carried out by (Kusumawardani et al., 2022) stated that now that most of the world's citizens have received a vaccine that is considered quite effective in dealing with the impact of Covid-19, the possibility that will trend in the future is MICE in the old format or original event which was temporarily abandoned for the main reason of health risks.

### **Conclusions**

There are three typologies of events that have emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic from the end of 2019 to 2021, which consist of original/regular events, virtual events, and hybrid events. The last two types are event types that are expected to continue to take place in the future. Each of them certainly has advantages and disadvantages but what is cer-

tain is that both are still possible to carry out while the pandemic is still ongoing. The emergence of the event typology is a form of adaptation and business strategy, especially in the MICE business sector so that it remains sustainable after a period of stagnation.

Technology plays a very important role in supporting the success of the current event, so the ability to master technology is a challenge for both participants and organizers. The most important thing is that all events must comply with regulations related to health protocols. Experience from a number of countries that actually adhere to health protocols strictly, is quite successful in running events as planned, especially for the hybrid type. Although it is now possible to carry out full original events such as conventional MICE activities.

Although only a literature review is expected to contribute ideas for MICE stakeholders, especially in Indonesia, in order to respond to the sustainability of MICE business in the future. Although it has become quite popular, virtual events and hybrid events are types of activities that may not have as big an impact as the original event.

Suggestions for the need for wider research related to organizing events during the pandemic, there are still very few references that can be obtained regarding the opportunities and challenges of implementing events that are in line with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Indonesia. So that research on opportunities, challenges, and evaluation of events during the pandemic is still very much needed.

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