

Environmental Issues in Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition (MICE) Tourism Sector

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Abstract. In an event management sector, the impact on environment attracts attention among researchers. This paper is a conceptual paper that discusses the growth of the MICE Tourism Sector and the environmental effects posed by it, and sustainable development in event management. A SWOT analysis is used to discuss on the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat of event managing. It is expected that in event management, the environment is affected by high use of energy, transportation and water.

Keywords: MICE, environment and sustainability.

1. Introduction

Special event is one of the sectors under the umbrella of tourism. This special event sector also includes Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition (MICE). This type of special event is categorized according to meeting, conference, incentive travel, exhibition and corporate event [9]. This event has been proven to generate income to a country via event attractions and the number of visitors to the country, mainly on business purposes. Unfortunately, there is still a dearth of study that discusses on the environmental challenges in MICE event. For this reason, MICE has been chosen as it posed environmental effects that arise from the use of energy, transportation and water while conducting this type of event.

In Malaysia, this event has been verified as a potential sector that increases Malaysia's income [7]. Although the MICE event has advantage on the country's profit, this event affects the environment by producing waste, which leads to the implication of using more energy and rubbish disposal. For example, a huge gathering of people leaves a harmful yet inevitable result on the surroundings such as air, land and water. Therefore, it is important to minimize the impact when organizing an event.

2. The Growth of MICE Tourism Sector

The Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia reported that this sector has been identified as the potential sector for the growth of Malaysia's economy [7]. This is supported by Department of Statistic, Malaysia, which has declared that in 2008, RM 383 million incomes were derived from this sector. It is also reported that for the next 10 years, there would be an additional of 8,000 job opportunities from event sector [7]. The growth of this sector also creates demand in providing good infrastructure such as hotels, public places and other attractions [5]. It is reported that the total expenditure from MICE in 2008 was RM 327.8 million [3]. This is because this sector demands better facilities, thus attracts more tourists to Malaysia. The amount allocated for providing better infrastructure would be more meaningful if the facilities provided are based on green technology. Hence, if the event stakeholders are committed in applying green technology during an event, it will help reduce the cost of event operations, thus leading to an increase in financial performance.

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Undoubtedly, this sector generates significant revenues for Malaysia. This scenario highlights the value of MICE in Malaysia and thus, the reason why it is important to ensure this sector remains competitive and successful. For this reason, it is empirically important to do research in this sector because even though this sector is proven to generate a country's income, it must not degrade the environment. Any decision in developing a country must consider the benefits for future generation. Therefore, the role of MICE in generating income for a country must not affect the environment. Concerning this issue, it is important to consider the social, economic and environmental impacts when organizing an event. These impacts is also known as three pillars impact in event [8]. MICE has several advantages on the country's economy and society development; it encourages profits and produces more job opportunities. Thus, considering sustainability development elements such as society, economy and environment in event management operation is important to ensure the sustainability of this sector.

2.1. Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainability is widely used in many areas but the main idea is to provide benefits for current generation, without neglecting the effects that it would bring to future society. The term 'sustainability' belongs to ecology and it refers to the potential of ecosystem to subset over time (Reboratti, 1991, cited in [1, p. 7]). Based on this, there is a transition of study that relates ecology or environment towards human institutions. As a result, for the past decades, sustainability development has become a topic of discussion by most researchers.

Sustainability Development (SD) is defined by the Brundland Commission as 'development that meets the needs of the current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and aspirations' or alternatively, preserving the environment for the present and future generations (WCED, 1987; cited in [2], p. 2). In this definition, it involves basic needs that include food, water, energy for cooking, keeping warm or cool, clothing and others. It concentrates on producing a better quality of life for the society, both economically and environmentally. SD focuses on two terms; sustainability and development. Sustainability discusses on maintaining human-centered activities such as agriculture, natural resource management, health care provision, urban centers etc. On the other hand, development relates to improving all these activities toward betterment [2]. It shows that the issues of sustainability concern with the community development especially in protecting the environment while giving benefit to the society. Unfortunately this issue is still remained unsolved as organizing an event creates a disadvantage towards the environment [4]. Thus, it is important to identify the environmental practices among the event organizers in event management.

2.2. Environmental Challenges in Event Sector

There are many environmental issues involved in operating an event; the most obvious being the repercussion of transportation. This contributes to green house toxic emission as well as other negative effects on natural resources. The problem can also be found in the volume of rubbish produced and the need for their disposal. This issue is well discussed by Meegan Jones in 2010 titled 'Sustainable Event Management: A Practical Guide'. The author discussed that the major areas of impact of events are energy, transport, waste management, waste reduction and resource recovery, including materials purchasing and procurement. High usage of these elements creates undesirable effects to the ecosystem. For example, using transportation during an event produces an amount of toxic emission that will affect the ecosystem. As to overcome this problem, the event organizers should limit the number of vehicles used in an event. For example, providing shuttle busses help reduce the usage of smaller vehicles that may only carry little load. Reducing environmental impact from transportation becomes one of the main problems in event management. Hence, it is important that event stakeholders practices environmental protection during organizing an event.

It is vital to ensure that all event stakeholders are aware of strategies in reducing this deficiency. Thus, concise investigation is needed in order to understand sustainability issue in event management and SWOT analysis is used to discuss this issue precisely based on strength, weakness, opportunity and threat.

3. SWOT Analysis

3.1. Strength

The strength of event organizers in sustaining the resources depends on practices that can be implemented before, during and after the event. It is based on the question on what are the practices that can reduce the environmental impact. Based on this, sustainability can be achieved if event organizers are concerned in reducing energy, water usage and waste disposal during an event.

3.2. Weakness

Weaknesses are related to barriers and challengers in ensuring that the environment sustains. It is well discussed in the study of [4] that organizing an event involves energy, waste management and waste reduction. Furthermore, issues such as biodiversity and archaeology should also be considered when organizing an event. These factors are important in event organizing. In addition to that, it is important that event organizers implement green practices during an event such as reducing electricity volts in conserving energy.

3.3. Opportunity

Opportunity discusses on the advantages in monitoring the impact. Full commitment and support from the government in reducing the environmental impact is crucial. Emphasizing this issue to public and allocating funds in maintaining the environment will be the most important factor in achieving this objective.

3.4. Threat

Threat elaborates on barriers in achieving the aim of environmental sustainability. The threat can come from event organizers, especially if they have lack of environmental knowledge in implementing green practices during an event. Furthermore, as cited in [6] p. 85, Bansal and Roth (2000), Marshall et al. (2004) and Lynes and Andrachuk (2008) discussed that lack of resources is one of the barriers in implementing green practices.

Based on SWOT analysis, it is suggested that all parties must participate in preserving the nature. An understanding and cooperation between event delivery organizations and intra organizational stakeholders at operation level must be obtained.

As a result, this leads to the emergence of a new area of study in evaluating environmental impact. This creates a demand in identifying indicators in providing indication as to whether or not the environment is sustained. Unfortunately, insufficient studies had been done in discussing the actual practices among event organizers as compared to discussing the issues of environment. Furthermore, there are many contradicting views among researchers in other sectors namely banking, manufacturing, health etc. but less study that discussed on environmental practices and event performance. Based on this, it is suggested that further studies should be done in identifying environmental practices among event practitioners and their performance. Moreover, most researchers evaluate environmental performance through environmental assessment tools. Hence, it should be a standard instrument in measuring environmental practices by event organizers.

4. Conclusion

Evaluating environmental impacts from both positive and negative perspectives generates better understanding on the proper usage of natural resources. The study on environmental impacts in event leads to discussion on greening issues. Greening an event involves conceptualizing an event towards becoming more environmental friendly and implementing process that reduces energy. But how far is the implementation of green event in MICE industry? Conclusive research is therefore needed to fill the gap in understanding the implementation of green or environment practices in MICE industry.

In conclusion, the growth of this sector creates both positive and negative effects to the country's revenue and community. Although it is proven that this sector creates advantages to the country's revenue, it is

important to achieve balance, environmentally. Thus, the commitment from all stakeholders are needed to ensure the implementation of green practices in event management.

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