



## Green Event Management Practices by Melali MICE in the New Normal Era of Covid-19 Pandemic

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the green practices of executing events in Bali. The study was conducted in Melali MICE as one of the established PCO's companies in Bali and has the membership of the Indonesian Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition and Event Organizers. The technique of collecting data used a qualitative research approach and open-ended questionnaires. The results show that waste management, energy efficiency technologies, and technologies for protecting biodiversity are current green practices implemented by businesses. Customer mentality, lack of infrastructure equipment, costs, lack of technology, and lack of government support are obstacles associated with implementing green practices. This study has some limitations such as obtaining the supporting data from other related stakeholders like hotels and resorts due to the covid-19 pandemic that makes not all hotels and resorts can keep operating. In addition, it is recommended that significant changes in customer thinking and the introduction of new technologies related to green initiatives could increase the demand for future green events.

**Keywords:** *Green Practices; MICE, Green Events; Tourism; Sustainability*

### **Introduction**

The MICE event activities can give significant motivations to companies and tourists in a promoting tourist destination (Nadkarni, 2019). The role and impact of planned events in tourism has been proved and becoming more and more important to the popularity of tourist destinations. Since "Event Tourism" was just established decades ago in both the tourism industry and science, the subsequent growth of this sector can only be said to be spectacular (Zhou, 2021). Despite many challenges, international tourism demand remained strong in 2016. According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (Almuhri & Al-Azri, 2019), the arrival and flow of foreign tourists increased

by 3.9% to a total of 1,235 million. Last year, an estimated 46 million overseas travelers (guests) compared to 2015.

Bali as the world tourist destination has developed its tourism sector rapidly. The development of the tourism industry is due to its unique cultural diversity, customs, and hospitality of the locals and the very natural beauty of nature, especially the beautiful seascapes. Therefore, Bali continues to develop all existing possibilities to increase tourism in order to remain a tourism center both domestically and internationally. The statistical data released in June 2014 (International Congress and Convention Association), Bali was in the 40th position in the 2013 Annual Congress and Convention Association, with a maximum of 55 international conference events. Singapore is 6th (175 times), Bangkok is 20th (93 times), Kuala Lumpur is 33rd (68 times), and is slightly behind other ASEAN countries.

However, Bali is far superior to other destinations in Indonesia, such as Jakarta in 94th place (26 times), Yogyakarta 265th place (8 times) and Bandung 328th place (6 times). Known as a leisure tourist destination in the world for a long time, Bali is now also the destination of MICE. Tourism through event activities is regarded as two side of a coin, which has its both positive and negative impacts. Therefore, sustainable development is a crucial factor to be maintained, especially Bali that is developed to be a MICE event destination. In this case, ideas to implement green practices' events are deserved to be highly appreciated. Therefore, this study aims at investigating an awareness of implementing green practices' events in MICE industry that are flourish in the Island of the God.

### ***Literature Review***

The term "MICE" is an acronym for conferences, incentives, conventions (conferences), and exhibitions (Rittichainuwat et al, 2020; Rwigema, & Celestin, 2020; Ranasinghe et al, 2020; Ho & Sia, 2020). A "meeting" is an event in which multiple participants gather in the same place to consult and engage in activities (Safaeva, 2021). Organized meetings are going to held for a certain intention, which are set in such a way for a period of time. An incentive meeting for instance is a part of an agenda of a company or corporate, which give its employees a reward for achievements to make the company success in business (Fang, 2020). This incentive meeting usually includes incentive tours and their arrangements are organized by an established and a professional tour operator as well as travel agent as an industry (Dolanskinski et al, 2021). The meeting that involves groups of travelers creating an event in which the group members gather discussing about the company's progress in business as well as enjoying the beauty and unique culture of a destinations for pleasure escaping from routines and gaining for rejuvenation afterwards (Wu, 2020). Additionally, the meeting pursues different goals starting from socio-cultural issues, economic, climate, or even political like parties that consolidate for an election. An exhibition as the last letter in the term of MICE according to Davidson (2020) can convey the purpose of building and maintaining a corporate networking and also be a media of promoting a company's products in the context of marketing communication and sales.

Meanwhile, in a hospitality industry that involves international hotel chains the exhibition itself is termed as "fairs" (Marques & Santos, 2017). In fact, MICE includes event activities that are packed in such a way to be creative economy or industry. Jurakanit & Taweepornpatomkul (2018) introduces the management of MICE events is organized in a mixture or blended some event genres for the sake of corporate business fairs. The samples of these events including a purposeful funding event, entertainment and leisure activities, festivals and special events, government and civil events, marketing events, and sporting events. Other events are listed to be organized programs related to some intended events, such as parties, tours, team building activities, gala dinners. The activities of MICE are attended by either domestic or international visitors or a combination both of them (Marais et al., 2017). Traveling is the prominent features for the MICE activities, therefore, they can be interconnected with hospitality and

service industries. This statement supported by Smagina (2017) who stated that the MICE events' activities are closed related to travel and tourism business. According to Chon & Maier (2010) those who are travelling as usual tourists are different from others who are doing event MICE activities.

Reservations of hotels and meeting venues in advance are required for doing the event MICE activities because involving large number of participants (in group). In addition, other travelers must be also doing reservation in order to get facilities and services required. This situation negotiating skills of an event organizer are needed for reserving rooms and venues with their facilities as well as negotiating a meeting package. The following steps to be fixed are determining meeting programs, schedules including the tour itineraries of the participants. Since the MICE events are regarded as a niche industry, which has a link with a corporate, it can certainly give revenue for a destination that host the MICE events (Smagina, 2017). There are various stakeholders involve in the business of MICE events. These roles arise some terms, such as professional convention organizers (PCOs), event management companies (EMCs), Destination management companies (DMCs), and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Other than the mentioned roles, there are some others like hotels and resorts, incentive houses, shipping companies, industry associations, and. Congress and Exhibition Center (Kim et al., 2020).

Sightseeing and events can have a negative impact on the environment (Moise & Macovei, 2014; Kim, Hlee & Joun, 2016). The fact shows that resources are being utilized for conducting event MICE activities can give impact towards the depletion of the resources used. For example, the use of water, electricity, and other logistic supplies getting increased for conducting events in high frequency. In this situation managing "green" events related to the event activities is expected to minimize their negative impacts on the environment (Kim et al, 2020). Guidelines for all stakeholders involved in event MICE activities can provide a tool for green practice. These guidelines can be issued by MICE organizations incorporate with the governmental and non-governmental organizations, and associations (Park & Kim, 2017).

The benefits proposed by these organizations are the best business practices, including improving the environment, reducing resource consumption and reducing costs, the social benefits of the community, and the benefits of reputation. In Indonesia, ICEB is promoting the implementation of Green MICE practices with the goal of making the country "greener" and becoming a leader in the Asian region. A feature of Bali is that the concept of sustainability strategy is based on the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana and Sad Kertih, the local genius for balance and preservation. The topics most often covered in the guidelines are: Policy implementation, communication (internal and external), event materials and products, supplier and partner, water and energy efficiency (Kim et al, 2020).

Waste management. `Green practices`, in the MICE industry, refer to policies, procedures or acts done by the events' suppliers to minimize negative environmental impacts. The MICE green practices, suggested by the different guidelines, are an integral part of the planning, management, and operations of the events. For example, when providing drinking water to the attendees in order to eliminate polluting single use of plastic bottles, it is better to use water pitchers and reusable or compostable cups instead (Liu & Lei, 2021). Green practices can then be simple changes as well.

### ***Research Methodology***

A qualitative survey was conducted in Bali from August to October 2021 to assess the recognition and implementation of Bali's environmentally friendly practices as a destination for business tourism, with 24 respondents. A face-to-face interview was held to the Managing Directors, Director of Sales and Marketing, Finance Director, Event Manager, Purchasing Manager, Graphic Design Supervisor, Graphic Designer, Administration Supervisor, Administration Officer, IT and AV Manager, IT and AV

Officer, Accounting, Event Production, Senior Sales Executive, Sales Executive, Operation Officer, and General Affair as it is shown in table 1.

Table 1. The Managerial Positions of Melali MICE

No	Position	Number of staff
1	Managing Director	1
2	Director of Sales and Marketing	1
3	Finance Director	1
4	Event Manager	1
5	Purchasing Manager	1
6	Graphic Design Supervisor	1
7	Graphic Designer	2
8	Administration Supervisor	1
9	Administration Officer	3
10	IT and AV Manager	1
11	IT and AV Officer	1
12	Accounting	1
13	Event Production	1
14	Senior Sales Executive	1
15	Sales Executive	4
16	Operation Officer	1
17	General Affair	2
TOTAL		24 Person

Source: Melali MICE, 2022

Targeted sampling was used to ensure accurate information and to select the most appropriate individual to answer the interview question. Therefore, the following four criteria have been established. (1) Industry: Respondents are currently working at Melali MICE, which organizes or conducts MICE events and activities. (2) Location: The address of the PCO's company is in Bali and organizes MICE events and activities in Bali. (3) Relevance of Answers: Respondents of managerial positions have sufficient experience and knowledge for organizing or conducting MICE events and activities to answer interview questions. (4) Intercultural restrictions: Respondents can understand and speak English. The date and place of the interview was then determined according to their availability. The interview questions were designed according to existing guidelines for green practices at MICE events and activities. Thus, they were divided into one introductory part and three main sections to reach the research objectives. Based on the responses, follow-up questions were formulated when necessary. The introductory part consisted in general `warmup` questions about (1) the respondents` information: position, gender, nationality, age, professional and educational backgrounds and (2) the organizations` positioning: date of creation, type of MICE events, facilities, and organizational process for MICE. The first set of corpus questions concerned awareness of green practices: definition of green practices, perception of the implementation in the MICE industry, organization commitment, training, and external communication on green practices (clients and attendees).

The second set was about the actual implementation of green practices: organization certification, material and products provided to the attendees, origin of material and products, supplier`s selection, water and energy efficiency, and waste management. The third and last set of questions focused on the challenges of implementing green practices with two main points: the problems faced by the organizations to implement green practices, and the solutions to overcome them. To analyze the data, the

interviews oral content was first transcribed. Then, inductive coding of themes was done from the data obtained with underjudge reliability. Four sections were designed following the four sets of interview questions, except that the solutions given by the respondents to implement green practices were moved from the last section (challenges of green practices implementation) to the second one (awareness of green practices). In each section, categories and subcategories were organized, arranged and filed from the coding units. The table that records the data is divided into four columns: 1. (Sub) category. 2. Ratio of Melali MICE to his senior position as a survey respondent. The results are shown in the next section and are quoted to support tabular diagrams.

### Results and Discussions

Of the 24 Melali MICE respondents, only a majority are under 36 years old (1), 40% are 36-50 years old, and only 14% (2 people) are 51-65 years old. Respondents are fairly young when evaluated in the light of management. By gender, 67% are male and 33% are female, with high-level positions representing the hotel and tourism industry (Nickson, 2013), with females being most strongly represented in low-level positions. Only 20% of respondents are non-Balinese, indicating that some foreigners are stakeholders in the MICE industry and participate in the decision making of the organization. Respondents mainly studied in undergraduate and graduate programs. Different paths can lead to managerial positions in the Events and Tourism industries.

Table 2. Respondent Information

(Sub)category	Melali MICE
Age	
20-35	39%
36-50	47%
51-65	14%
Gender	
Male	67%
Female	33%
Nationality	
Balinese	80%
Non-Balinese	20%
Highest level of education	
Bachelor	79%
Master	14%
Doctor	7%

Regarding awareness of green practices in the MICE industry, all respondents have a clear definition of green practices in the MICE industry (Table 3), 78% because the organization in which they work reduces the negative impact on the environment. I admitted that I am acting responsibly. When it comes to internal communication with employees, Melali MICE is explicitly encouraged to follow green practices through dedicated training or by making employees aware of the importance of reducing their environmental footprint. Interestingly, the types of communication vary greatly from group to group. Melali MICE seems to be a PCO company that prefers to use informal communication and receive specific training. Melali MICE Manager said:

“We don't provide much training on green practices to our employees. However, we advise employees to save energy and at least recycle paper. I try my best not to use paper. Another answer from the supervisor stated that ‘When hiring a new employee, you usually have two full training days, but add one day for green orientation. It provides knowledge about green gloves, green events, activities at hotel facilities, and what practices the hotel practices in each sector. That is the hotel

policy. But we do it for the environment. Each year, we set up at least two courses from our trainers, and here we set up two programs, the Green Implementation Program and the Sustainability Program, to train our employees in order to gain more knowledge about the environment and the latest information. The Green Introductory Program is aimed at everyone working here, at least twice a year, not just new employees".

In regards with external communication, 100% report that they are promoting green practices, but there are differences depending on seniority. Customers seem to be the most in demand (45%). All respondents had some ideas about solutions for implementing green practices at MICE. This is a very positive result. Various proposals have been made. One respondent, sales and marketing director, said,

"Overall, they must be like cities, you know, Bali, they are teams or together as a unit in all cities. You have to put yourself in to work. "Respondents had various solutions for event production. "If you want to be eco-friendly, you have to change your mindset. It should be set that way by the school, not just when they are at work. With the set-up, you need to know what's next, where the plastic bottles go, where the water goes, where the paper goes, because no one is thinking about it. I haven't practiced much at school and have been studying for the last 10 years, but I'm not just focusing on that".

Especially due to the pandemic, a coffee break cannot be set in the room like it used to be. As shown in Figure 1, coffee wraps tea and treats and is passed to the representative's table by the waiter / waitress.



Figure 1. Coffee break passed round to the table without being set-up in a room

The implementation of the green event by Melali MICE during the new normal of covid-19 pandemic also apply such a practice as food tray, cutleries, and the wrap of the food using materials that eco-friendly and the plastic bottles like mineral water is changed with reflection bottles from glasses as it is shown in figure 2.



Figure 2: Eco-friendly materials for food wrap and drinking bottles

Another solution was to involve the customer in pricing. Senior Sales Executives and his Sales Executives said customers need to pay more for higher power consumption or offer promotions to guests who want to be "more environmentally friendly". Some respondents pointed out that the information was lacking and they did not know where it was. Suggested solutions from affected samples: industry

associations and leadership, education, information, communication, facility development. The majority of top management, including the workforce, seems to be aware of environmentally responsible practices.



Figure 3. The more eco-friendly of UPS power bank to change the *genzet* that uses fuel

Table 3. Awareness of Green Practices

(Sub)category	Melali MICE
Perception	100%
Organization Commitment	78%
Internal Communication	100%
Infomal	87%
Training	13%
External Communication	100%
Attendess Guest	15%
Clients	45%
Suppliers partnes	33%
T	7%
Solutions	100%

There are no specific standards or rules for the actual implementation of environmentally friendly practices (Table 4), and there are no environmentally friendly certifications, but they are being obtained. This represents a minority of samples. One of the respondents who seems to be justified states that it is not worth it to small businesses because it is too time consuming and costly. The same respondent said he has already implemented many green practices. It is argued that organizations implementing green practices do not aim to be recognized by all standards. Key issues in implementing green practices are power savings, waste reduction and local product selection. Most respondents mention cost savings (35%) from implementing green practices, suggesting that implementing green practices in Bali can reduce costs. Even one of the PCO's assistants, the general manager, said that:

“In fact, my company doesn't advertise green events, but in reality, if something is related to or sustainable, it saves money. Our event uses online registration, participant subscriptions, so we don't print paper that can be expensive, especially in terms of food and drink. These results show that most employees are actually applying green practices”.



Figure 4. A Hybrid Conference during the New Normal of Covid-19

Source: Melali MICE, 2021

Table 4. Implementation of Green Practices

(Sub)category	Melali MICE
Standards and rules	0%
Certification	0%
Green Policies	0%
Green or social activities	67%
Choice of products	100%
Certified or 'greener' products	8%
Local products	92%
Choice of Suppliers Partners	100%
Green	20%
Local	80%
Network	56%
Quality of services and products	90%
Safety	75%
Transportation	30%
Electricity Saving	100%
Air Conditioner	25%
Lighting	72%
Other	3%
Water Saving	40%
Clearing and Cleaning	40%
Waste Reduction	100%
Digital technology use	62%
Donation Sales of products	10%
General waste reduction	8%
Recycling system	10%
Reuse of products	10%
Cost saving	35%

The results of barriers to adopting green practices at MICE events and activities are ranked from highest to lowest (Table 5). They show that they are facing seven major obstacles, starting with respecting customer demands and decisions. This is the most important (38%). Therefore, quality of service and customer satisfaction seem to be the driving force of the industry. Respondents from the first group said:

"It must be all in line with your goals, so it's hard to say from our side. We're trying to save on the costs we can save. Energy we can save. I'm trying to save. 'Another comment: 'As I said before,



customers focus most of their decisions on the cost and equipment of a hotel, and the budget of that hotel, so they are less involved in environmental practices. Respondents working as senior sales executives added: ‘In the tourism industry, it's hard to say because you have to follow the needs of your customers. That way, customers often don't want the green’.

These testimonies show that the service-oriented MICE industry is still primarily focused on customer satisfaction (basically budget and fun). It also shows a lack of awareness from customers (35%) and partners (10%). Other barriers cited are difficulty in communication (45%), need for import of goods (10%), cost (50%), difficulty in meeting standards (35%), and lack of information. It was (35%). Note the disagreements from some interviewees, as some interviewees recognize this as an obstacle, but recognize that implementing green practices can save costs. Melali MICE's Event Manager and Chief Financial Officer said:

“Another very interesting point was revealed by a sales person. If they pay more, that's not the right way. If they want to implement green practices, they need to be regenerated into a green package. The price of a green package should be lower than the price of the entire package. If you need a green standard, even if you need a complete setup, go for a drink behind the meeting room and put a pen over there ... Sir Madam is green at this event when talking to customers. We are practicing. So can you bring me a drink behind me ... and the question that comes back is "why".

Green packages can be more expensive than standard packages, but the quality of service is poor. Interviewees did not explain why green packages are more expensive, but were able to talk about abusive green marketing. From the customer's point of view, it may seem unreasonable to pay a higher price for the green package and lower the quality of the service compared to the traditional package. In summary, all leaders seem to recognize the difficulty of implementing green practices for a variety of reasons.

Table 5. Obstacles of Implementing Green Practices

<b>(Sub)category</b>		<b>Melali MICE</b>
Clients enquiries		38%
External lack of awerness		45%
	Clients/Guest	35%
	Suppliers/partners	10%
Table 5 Obstacles of implementing green pract		
<b>(Sub)category</b>		<b>Melali MICE</b>
Difficulties to communicate		45%
Need for imported products		10%
Costs		50-70%
Difficulties to follow standards		35%
Lack of information		35%

### Conclusion

The outcomes of this study reveal that the managerial positions of Melali MICE PCO’s company are aware about the green practices of MICE events. Its Awareness is proven through the communique achieved through the managerial positions, each inner and external, and their commitment towards the values of the green practices. The practices implemented, which permit charges saving, subject in particular strength saving (mainly lighting), waste reduction (specially recycling system) and desire of neighborhood products. From the PCO of Melali MICE studied, each in price of organizing and working

MICE activities and events, no matter their willingness of going 'greener', a few problems are encountered to implement the MICE events' green practices due to some drawbacks. It seems that this service- orientated enterprise gives a selected level in feature of the clients' enquiries. Thus, it has to prepare, control and function MICE activities and events as a consequence to the requests, even supposing a few inexperienced practices are set aside. Even a few issues are handled, the respondents appear to have thoughts of a way to face some challenges.

The efforts of the PCO's company of Melali MICE to campaign green practice events 'should be supported by other companies' group in order the idea of the green practices not only a slogan but it is really implemented. It is recommended further that it requires preparing discussions to alternate experiences, through conferences, which is able to promote Bali as a MICE event destination, which is featured by the implementation of the green practices.

### **Limitation and Study Forward**

This study has some limitations such as obtaining the supporting data from other related stakeholders like hotels and resorts due to covid-19 pandemic that makes not all hotels and resorts are able to keep operating. Therefore, the reach of respondents is limited to those with this access. For the future researches during the pandemic period, consolidation can be carried out, organizing inwardly and fixing what has been a weakness or deficiency. After the crisis, there will always be new paths and opportunities that can be achieved, when society have corrected themselves and developed creativity that brings renewal and novelty. The spirit and hope continue to be lit, the episodes of life must be passed because this is the cycle of life. After a crisis there is always an opportunity.

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