



Stages of International Virtual Competition Implementation in Indonesia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the stages of implementing virtual competition as one of the types of virtual events. The virtual competition which was being studied was the 2021 International Photography and Short Movie Festival (IPSMF). One of the industries most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic is the event industry. As an industry that generates revenue from crowds of visitors, most event organizers are turning their offline agenda into virtual events. These phenomena continue to rise during the post-pandemic days. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. The analysis in this study was carried out based on the stages of organizing virtual which consists of Pre-Plan, Plan, Accomplish, and Response and Engage. This study indicate that the implementation of the 2021 IPSMF virtual competition has several differences. These differences exist in all stages. Based on these differences, it can be concluded that the activities carried out in the implementation of virtual events can be adjusted to the conditions and needs of the virtual event in question. The implementation of virtual events has a very wide audience reach compared to conventional events. Event organizers are required to create a digital platform with up to date, accurate, and interactive content.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the Covid-19 virus has a very large impact on human life and has made many changes to human behavior and lifestyle. Many industries and businesses must accelerate the application of digital technology (LaBerge et al., 2020). One of the industries most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic is the event industry. Based on the survey results from the Indonesian Event Industry Council, there were 96.4 percent of event delays and 84.8 percent of event cancellations in 17 provinces in Indonesia due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a potential loss per company with a ratio of 2.57 billion Rupiahs to 6.63 billion Rupiahs. Event industry workers must be innovative and adaptive in dealing with pandemic conditions. As an industry that prioritizes revenue from crowds of visitors, most event organizers turn their offline agendas into virtual events (Nabila & Wijaksono, 2021). The health safety measures which emerged as an effort to prevent the spread of the



pandemic, cause a compulsory and rapid adoption of distributed meetings across most industries worldwide (Standaert et al., 2021).

Virtual events can offer more than just an alternative to conventional face-to-face events. Saving time, money and resources is another benefit of hosting online events. In fact, it is an economic benefit that can be felt by different parties involved as stakeholders in virtual events. In addition, due to its inclusive nature, virtual events can attract international participants to take part in events held locally. Virtual meetings allow universities and associations or organizations to increase their reach and conduct international collaborations and position their research on an international stage (Rubinger et al., 2020).

Despite the rapid change in the industry, research on the implementation of virtual events, including virtual competition is still limited. Empirical research on virtual or even hybrid events (i.e., a combination of virtual and face-to-face components) in the tourism, hospitality and events literature appears to be extremely limited (Yung et al., 2022). In fact, research on the implementation of virtual events in various forms of events, including virtual festivals and competition, is quite difficult to find. As the world of virtual and hybrid meetings continue to gain popularity, there is an immediate need for additional literature within this area of study (Sox et al., 2017). The development of virtual event nowadays have created the need for academic guidelines on this matter even more urgent. In the context of academic meetings and conferences, there is the growing need for a set of guidelines secondary to the COVID-19 pandemic (Rubinger et al., 2020; Yung et al., 2022).

According to Sharma et al. (2021), the academic world has called for research in the event industry, especially on how business owners interpret the impact of the pandemic. Galvani et al. (2020) and Sigala (2020) also stated that many researchers saw that the pandemic had created opportunities for the transformation of the event industry. Regarding the alignment between the event industry and educational programs, previous research has examined on the skills and attributes required by the event industry as they claim a mismatch between industry needs and the event management curriculum (Steriopoulou & Wrathall, 2021).

Not many studies have been found that discuss virtual competition in Indonesia. Virtual competition is a type of virtual events, which in recent years have been increasingly being held due to the pandemic situation. Virtual events are a new thing where event organizers must be adaptive to new patterns and schemes after the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous research that analyzed the implementation of virtual events was still based on conventional event theory, for example research conducted by Nabila and Wijaksono (2021).

This research will focus on one of the competitions that must be transformed into virtual, namely International Photography and Short Movie Festival (IPSMF) 2021. The competition is an event which participants come from several regions in Indonesia and abroad (IPSMF2021, 2021). According to Welch (2020), virtual events may not be able to completely replace the offline event experience, but virtual events are the choice that must be made for hosting events during a pandemic. Organizing virtual events will indeed affect the amount of revenue for a brand. However, the main goal of virtual events is that interaction and communication between brands and consumers remain smooth and open up opportunities for brands to continue to do business (Nabila & Wijaksono, 2021).

To collect data in this study, researchers did an observation and conduct interviews with parties who have a role and contribution in the IPSMF 2021 virtual competition. The analysis in this study was carried out based on the stages of organizing virtual events proposed by Rubinger et al. (2020). According to Rubinger, et al (2020), there are four stages in organizing virtual events, namely: Pre-plan, Plan, Accomplish, and lastly Response and Engage. The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of the stages of implementing virtual events, including virtual competition.

1.1. Literature Review

a. Events

Events have long played an important role in human life. Events are defined as phenomena arising from non-routine events that have a recreational, cultural, personal or organizational purpose separate from the normal activities of daily life, and whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people. Goldblatt (2005) mentions an event as a unique moment in time that is celebrated with ceremonies and rituals to fulfill certain needs (Shone & Parry, 2019).

Today, events are at the center of human culture at an unprecedented level. The increase in the amount of time and expenditure spent on recreation has led to rapid growth in the organization of public events, celebrations and entertainment. According to Getz (2005), an event is an event that occurs only once or rarely occurs outside the normal activities of a sponsoring or organizing body. For participants or guests, events are opportunities for recreation, to experience social or cultural experiences outside of normal activities or daily activities (Bowdin et al., 2012).

It is important to highlight the notion of event from Goldblatt (2005) and Getz (2005) because both ideas stipulate that an event is the production and creation of something that becomes a special moment or unique experience. Incorporating ceremonies, rituals, needs, and experiences into the definition of the event shows that the event also contains physical elements and psychological elements. This is expressed in the notion of a particular event and that the event is recognized as fulfilling a need, and thus creates the opportunity for some kind of experience. Mentioning that an event may also contain elements of ritual and ceremony suggests that, although every event is different, it can have some recognizable characteristics (Berridge, 2007).

b. Virtual Events

A virtual event is an event that is carefully curated by a committee and is seen and attended by participants from a distance and is not conventionally designed. Participants of virtual event experience the event and its content online, rather than gathering in person. Virtual events occur completely online which can be accessed by participants from anywhere in the world. All event participants need is internet access. Using a tailor-made platform, virtual events can be attended using a variety of devices – desktop computers, mobile phones, or tablets. All presentations made in virtual events, both live and on demand, can be accessed by participants globally. Like a traditional physical meeting or event, this virtual event can also be fully associated with the identity of a company or organization. Virtual event attendees can interact, network, and collaborate using live chat, direct messaging, or video calling functions built into the virtual event platform (Ton & Le, 2021).

The advantage of virtual events related to web-based technology is that it can connect participants without having to travel. The new digital platforms of virtual events allow advanced virtual integration among users, giving opportunities for exchange of remote information. Interactive video and audio capabilities allow real-time interaction. These technologies allow the creation of virtual communities in which “social-virtual” events, at which participants meet to discuss a common topic, can be organized. Attendees can potentially deliver the same scientific contribution as at a live event without the need to move from their workplace; industries can also add commercial spots during online meetings (Porpiglia et al., 2020).

Virtual events can complement physical events by eliminating unnecessary travel. In addition, virtual events can democratize education, promote social and gender equality in educational participation, and provide uninterrupted access across time zones in a friendly environment (Honavar, 2021). Virtual events can also reduce carbon and pollution caused by human travel and mass movement (Roos et al., 2020). In addition, (Wreford et al., 2019) suggested that applying virtual reality in virtual events can help participants to replay and develop memorable memories. This app will generate more positive and stronger feelings towards the event and its activities while allowing access to those who may not be

physically able to attend.

c. Stages of Virtual Event

According to Rubinger et al. (2020), there are four stages in organizing virtual events, namely: Pre-plan, Plan, Accomplish, Response and Engage. Pre-plan consists of defining the audience, which is likely similar to previous face-to-face meetings. The recommendations in this stage include defining the organizing committee, defining target audience based on objective measures, assign a committee member as an Accessibility Chair to establish and oversee best practices of accessibility at the given virtual meeting for the given target audience, defining the type of meeting integral to its success, with focus on achieving translation of desired knowledge and engaging the target audience. The planning stage of a virtual meeting represents both large and small decisions about the format of the virtual meeting that is to be executed. This planning consists of formulating a comprehensive registration and scheduling process, deciding the types of virtual sessions that will be held within the conference, the technological requirements of the event, and how the event will be funded, monetized and marketed. Accomplishing meeting goals through execution and delivery of the virtual meeting is the stage of the meeting cycle where the planning comes to fruition. The planning stage will lay the groundwork for the execution, but there are a great number of considerations about how the sessions should be executed. The response and engagement stage of the virtual event cycle is important in ensuring the continued growth, development and continuous improvement.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative method with a descriptive type following (Estanyol, 2022; Nabila & Wijaksono, 2021; Rubinger et al., 2020; Ton & Le, 2021; Wreford et al., 2019). The use of this method aims to try to collect information and describe the implementation of virtual events which are new in Indonesia. This descriptive qualitative method is considered to be able to assist researchers in explaining and explaining in detail about the situation and conditions of implementing virtual events that are observed or experienced by researchers. The information obtained through descriptive qualitative methods is in the form of a thorough explanation of the condition of the object being observed (Daravonna & Dianita, 2021). The subject of this study is the 2021 International Photography and Short Movie Festival (IPSMF) virtual event. IPSMF is an annual event that has been held in Indonesia since 2016. During 2016 to 2019, IPSMF was always held offline. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world, IPSMF have started to be held online or virtual since 2020. The event is an international competition, where the participants come from several regions in Indonesia and abroad. This competition is expected to bring an interesting picture of various cultures and the dynamics of change experienced in each country, as well as see how these cultures exist as their future (IPSMFestival2021, 2021). IPSMF 2021 is also included in the Top 10 Events in the 2022 Bandung Tourism Calendar issued by the Bandung City Government of Indonesia (Indozone.id, 2021). The IPSMF 2021 event was included in one of the articles in the Iranian state media, namely The Islamic Republic News Agency. The coverage mentions the victory of The Recess as Best Short Fiction Film in the prestigious IPSMF 2021 event in Indonesia (Irna, 2021). Studies about virtual competition still very limited. This study represents research on virtual competition which has rarely been done.

Majority of studies on the scope of conferences, expos, events, and meetings employ quantitative approaches, however many other studies have noted a tendency toward the use of mixed methodologies to improve the validity and reliability of their findings. Low levels of research have been found in studies utilizing qualitative techniques, such as ethnography, to better understand the meanings that people attach to business events

(Draper et al., 2021). The use of qualitative methods in this studies is expected to expand the reference within the scope of event research.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pre-plan is the first stage that must be done in the implementation of virtual events according to Rubinger, et al (2020). This stage consists of: forming a core team, forming a team with representatives in charge in each division, determining the target audience, determining the type of virtual event to be held that focuses on the desired goal. The activities that were done in the early stage of planning the IPSMF 2021 was to form a small but compact core team, in this case consisting of people who were already known and had worked together before. This is done because during the pandemic it is difficult to meet directly with other people so it will be difficult to determine the quality of that person's work and the level of responsibility that can be fulfilled. The challenge of forming a trustworthy team in a virtual event during a pandemic was also stated by (Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020). Not only does distance influence trust, but this effect can partially be attributed to the use of communication technology adopted by distance collaborations. This influence may be further affected by the manner in which communication technology is used, since irregular, unpredictable, and inequitable communication between collaborators hampers trust. The responsibility of organizing virtual event is shouldered by its "author" which formulates the plan for and content of the event (Futaesaku, 2022).

After forming the core team, then proceed with open recruitment to form a larger team. After the larger team is formed, a briefing is held regarding the targets to be achieved in the implementation of IPSMF 2021. From the results of the study, it was found that the implementation of the Pre-plan stage does not always consist of forming a core team, forming a team with representatives in charge of each division, determining the target audience, determining the type of virtual event to be held that focuses on the desired goal. For virtual events that are carried out as a continuation of conventional events that have been carried out regularly, the target audience and the type of event to be held follow those applied in the previous event.

Plan is the second stage that must be done according to Rubinger, et al (2020). At this stage there are several derivatives, namely: planning the registration process, scheduling events, determining event performers, determining supporting technology, and determining income sources and marketing strategies. In IPSMF 2021, after forming a core team and a large team and discussing the targets to be achieved in the implementation of the event, the next thing to do is to compile a list of work to be done and a work timeline. Each division will hold a division meeting every week which will discuss the progress of the list of work that must be done by each member in the division. In addition to making a to-do list and timeline, what is also done in this planning stage is discussing the theme of the event, tagline, and moodboard for the IPSMF 2021 brand which will be implemented in all promotional materials. The moodboard includes the color tone, color palette, and font to be used.

This particular findings are quite different with Rubinger et al. (2020). Creating a to-do list and deciding on a certain timeline to finish the list was considered very important to keep all the preparation done on time and every person who were involved do their jobs according to their own job descriptions. Having a consensus on the tagline of the event and the nuance that will be implemented on event branding material was considered necessary to be done in the beginning of virtual event preparation to maintain harmony and integration in all promotional materials.

The planning stage also includes planning for supporting technology. The supporting technologies used to hold the IPSMF 2021 virtual event are Zoom, YouTube and Genflix. The selection of this supporting technology is the result of the team's agreement. Zoom (San Jose, CA: Zoom Video Communications Inc) is a global video conferencing platform that has

been widely used in virtual communications (Boland et al., 2022; Boonmoh et al., 2022). YouTube is a frequently used platform to relay video or to broadcast the live feed of virtual events. The sites for the purpose of delivering the event (Futaesaku, 2022). Genflix is used because it is a sponsor in the IPSMF 2021 event. As part of the sponsorship partnership, Genflix provides a platform to broadcast the IPSMF 2021 virtual event for one day so that the event can be watched by Genflix viewers on the platform. The films that were nominated for the winner were screened for 30 days. The use of video conferencing is especially visible in the face of COVID-19 restrictions.

The IPSMF committee also cooperates with sponsors as source of income. The income from the sponsors is used to finance the honorarium of the speakers and guest stars. Due to the pandemic period, the search for sponsors tends to be difficult, so no specific achievement targets have been set. The Covid-19 panic caused a major impact on firms' financial systems which hamper its operations. The annual profit for the firms is also severely affected due to the economic turbulence resulting from the pandemic. This condition might contribute to the lack of future budget in sponsorship (Sharipudin et al., 2022).

In the planning stage of IPSMF 2021, planning related to marketing is also carried out, especially those carried out using social media. The planning was related to content planning that had been carried out long before the event was held. The planning is carried out by the marketing team which includes what material will be displayed in the instastory and feeds of the official IPSMF 2021 Instagram account. The timeline for broadcasting the material is also made by the marketing team including for example when the names of the judges will be announced, and so on. Estanyol (2022) stated that social media, as well as social stories, has commonly used to promote events before COVID-19. This were further developed during the pandemic, by also integrating social media festival hashtags, and have been highlighted as one of the main channels for communicating future events.

According to Jaafar and Khan (2022), the pandemic has caused practically all marketing channels went digital, and the impact of digital marketing on consumer behaviour is altering the industry by driving companies to modify their digital marketing approach and strategy. Digital marketing plays an important role in building participants' trust in online events. In today's digital world, trust is the foundation of every relationship and digital marketing is at the heart of establishing the connection between customers and events. Therefore, event companies should create content that is worthy of reference, honest and truthful, has its value and rewarding to the participants. It is also recommended that event managers create a digital platform with content that is up to date, accurate, informative, and interactive.

Accomplish is the third stage carried out in virtual events according to Rubinger et al. (2020). At this stage there are several things that become the focus, namely: how to select technicians and moderators, and how to build interaction with the audience. However, in the implementation stage of IPSMF 2021, it is more directed to the implementation of all the plans that have been designed in the previous stage. This implementation stage includes implementing the things that have been stated in the cooperation agreement with the sponsor. The team will ensure that all products that will be promoted during the event are available, and all promotional materials are delivered when the event is live.

The implementation from the technical side of the live-stream is carried out by the logistics team. The technology used to manage the live-stream is vMix because the logistics team is used to using this technology. vMix is also considered to be able to meet the committee's needs for the 2021 IPSMF virtual event compared to other applications. Live streaming can be stated as a real-time interaction where users can broadcast live content and interact with other users. In recent years, live streaming has prospered due to the rapid growth in internet users during the past year as a result of technological developments and COVID-19. These platforms allowed for content to be freely created and opened an environment for users to engage and interact with this prospering new media (Merritt & Zhao, 2022). Streaming technology is used to broadcast live events with significantly fewer on-site attendees. Efforts can also be made to improve the design in order to achieve a

greater audiovisual impact (Estanyol, 2022).

The implementation phase of the 2021 IPSMF virtual event also involves the committee, MC and moderators, as well as performers who attend onsite and also online. The discussion session with the keynote speakers was conducted live online, where the keynote speakers were in their respective locations. However, the discussion moderator was present onsite at the location of the event. The entertainment session conducted by the performers was conducted online by displaying the recordings (tapping) that had been done previously. This is done to avoid technical obstacles that will reduce the quality of the display such as unclear audio, unstable signal, and so on. The recordings were not only performed by the performers, but also included the interactions between the MC and the performers. In addition to make it look more professional, tapping entertainment performers is done to reduce the number of people who must attend onsite. Foscarini et al. (2022) stated that the biggest downside to using virtual meeting technology seems to be the increased risk of technical issues that could completely derail the meeting. Technical problems are often caused and exacerbated by the user's lack of skill. Whereas virtual meetings have become dependent on the technology's ability to work as prescribed.

The implementation of the IPSMF 2021 event which is carried out virtually also involves the process of building interaction with the audience. The process is carried out by the MC guided by the show team. There are show team members who serve as floor directors and zoom hosts to monitor zoom. When there are participants in Zoom who ask questions, then they will give a signal to the MC to answer the question. The MC can also read the prompter placed in front of the MCs. Show team will show things that need to be mentioned by the MC in the prompter. Jung and Lee (2022) stated that attendees in online/virtual events who can interact only on screens may have short attention spans because of different time zones or limited concentration on the screen. To address this dilemma and facilitate knowledge creation, audience distraction should be minimized, and thus, it is important to engage through live chat function, using emojis, participating in polls, or adding in elements of gamification where appropriate. Through these means, organizers desire to create a milieu where online/virtual attendees can receive engagement, connection, and simultaneity to acquire desired information.

The interaction process with the audience during the IPSMF 2021 virtual event is very different from the conventional (non-virtual) event. One of the elements of a virtual event that is used to attract the attention of the audience is the virtual background. Digital technologies have become the main alternative to fill the communication gap left by the absence of personal contact. Virtualization is viewed as a necessity, while it is affirmed that the pandemic has accelerated the virtualization of events. Furthermore, the use of virtual stage is seen as an alternative (Estanyol, 2022).

Another thing that is very different is the very wide range of virtual events compared to conventional (non-virtual) events. The audience for the IPSMF 2021 virtual event come from various countries in the world. The audience does not have to bother attending directly at the event location. According to Futaesaku (2022), the most significant advantage of virtual events is their ability to conform to social distancing norms. Individuals can enjoy attending such events on websites from the comfort of their homes. Currently, we are experiencing online/virtual events, and can access it anywhere provided the Internet and devices are available. There are no limits in terms of time and space to attend online/virtual events (Jung & Lee, 2022).

Event participants interaction can also be stated as part of event experience. In virtual events, content and design of the virtual interaction could provide users with opportunities to be active participants, not merely passive viewers (Wreford et al., 2019). Engaging the attendees is one of the challenges faced in hybrid or virtual events. Adjusting the design of the website or platform where the event is to be hosted, publishing some of the content in advance—especially with high-quality prerecorded videos, creating spaces for live chat, posting on social media, and publishing short videos to encourage participation are some of the strategies that are considering in order to generate a sense of community among

attendees. An impactful moments needed to be created to keep the attention of the online attendees focused (Estanyol, 2022).

In the implementation of the IPSMF 2021 virtual event, a lot of improvisation is also done as is the case when conducting conventional (non-virtual) events. One of the improvisations that must be done is a welcome video delivered by the Governor of West Java Province, Ridwan Kamil. The video was only given on the D-day of the 2021 IPSMF event. The team had to improvise to include English subtitles in the video in a short time before the event started. Other improvisations that must be done relate to technical problems such as muted audio or unstable signal. When these conditions occur, the MCs will buy time by talking to each other. The committee has also prepared several alternative solutions in case of other technical problems, such as those related to the question-and-answer session during discussions with resource persons. There are several committee members who are given the task of asking questions that have been prepared in advance, if there are no participants who ask. Regarding to this, (Estanyol, 2022) points out the importance of having contingency plans and adopting crisis and emergency risk communication.

According to Rubinger, et al (2020), audience response and engagement is critical to ensure continued growth, development and improvement of events. The last step is to evaluate the overall event implementation. In connection with the last stage carried out in the implementation of IPSMF 2021, payments were also made in accordance with the cooperation agreement that had been made previously. In the last stage of holding IPSMF 2021, database collection was also carried out both regarding participants who took part in the competition and those who only attended to enliven the event. From the database, an overview of the age of the audience for the 2021 IPSMF event is obtained which can be used for the purpose of implementing the event in the following year. The data provided by the competition participants is based on the terms and conditions that existed at the time of registration.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the IPSMF 2021 virtual competition basically applies the stages of implementing the virtual event proposed by Rubinger et al., (2020) namely Pre-Plan, Plan, Accomplish, and Response and Engage. However, there are several differences in the details of the activities and there are also several activities that were not mentioned by (Rubinger et al., 2020). The first difference was found in the implementation of the Pre-Plan stage. For virtual events that are carried out as a continuation of conventional events that have been carried out regularly, the determination of the target audience and the type of event being held can follow those that have been applied to the previous event. Differences were also found in the implementation of the Plan phase. In this planning stage, discussions were held on the theme of the event, tagline, and moodboard for the IPSMF 2021 brand which will be implemented in all promotional materials. These are activities that were not mentioned in the implementation stages of the virtual event (Rubinger et al., 2020). The focus of the activities in the Accomplish stage carried out at the IPSMF 2021 virtual competition also has several differences from those mentioned (Rubinger et al., 2020). At this stage, what the IPSMF 2021 committee is doing is more directed to the implementation of all the plans that have been designed in the previous stage. This implementation stage also includes the execution of the cooperation agreement with the sponsor. The final stage in the implementation of the 2021 IPSMF virtual competition, apart from evaluating the overall implementation of the event and collecting data on both participants who took part in the competition and those who were only present to enliven the event, also includes making payments in accordance with the previous cooperation agreement. These payment settlement activities are activities not mentioned by Rubinger et al. (2020). Based on these differences, it can be concluded that the details of the activities carried out in the

implementation of the virtual events can be adjusted to the conditions and needs of the virtual event in question. In general, it can also be concluded that the implementation of virtual events has a very wide audience reach compared to conventional (non-virtual) events. Digital marketing plays an important role in building participant trust in online events. Event organizers are required to create a digital platform with up to date, accurate, informative and interactive content. In the implementation of the 2021 IPSMF virtual competition, many improvisations are also carried out as in holding conventional (non-virtual) events.

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