

**<sup>1</sup>The Importance of the Venue Selection in an Event Organization  
Case Study: Special Event Organization  
Rencontre Alumni Entreprise 1 & 2**

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**ABSTRACT**

The MICE industry in Indonesia has been growing fast in Indonesia. There are so many different ways to organize events from the planning to the evaluation. However, the determination of venue remains a very interesting issue to be studied. The success of event organization may be based on the venue selection. This study is aimed to examine the venue management in the special event management of the First and Second *Rencontre Entreprise-Alumni (REA)*. The objective of the study is to find out the importance of the venue selection in the impact of the success of the event. Thus, selecting an event venue will require identifying physical resources present in the location. The method of the research is descriptive using the participant observation and in-depth interview as data collection procedure. The sampling design is judgment sample with the most productive sample who are the exhibitors who was in the first only or the second only of REA, and in both events. The research gives a quite significant result to the event owner to improve the next event organization. All aspects must have been well thought including the attendees management to which the venue selection influenced the most. The event owner was taking the most important part in the venue selection that was very lightly taking the attendees' needs into consideration. The transportation would also take the biggest part of attendees' problem in accessing the venue.

Keywords: special event, venue management, site selection, event management, tourism and hospitality industry, MICE

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**Introduction**

**Background**

The world of MICE industry is newly booming in many countries in the world including Indonesia. Indonesian government has committed to the industry in the business in general by its new organization structure in the tourism ministry. Thus, MICE industry is positively welcomed in the Indonesian business activity by the numerous events and exhibition held in the large scale of convention

venues as well as in the small scale such as in shopping malls, office towers, and many other places. The special event organization is always a very interesting issue for research because of its unique value. Related to the event tourism industry in Indonesia, it is a highly promising element of Indonesia's tourism industry that the government is keen to develop it further through the Wonderful Indonesia campaign. Indonesia has plenty to offer to differentiate itself from other countries in the region, especially in MICE industry with many potential societal and cultural areas of tourism to be developed.

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The events industry, including festivals, meetings, conferences, exhibitions, incentives, sports and a range of other events, is rapidly developing and makes a significant contribution to business and leisure related tourism (Wagen, 2007: Series Preface). Events are important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations (Getz, 2008: 403 - 428). As suggested by Getz (2008: 59), much pertinent sociological theory has contributed indirectly to Event Studies with specific applications among others is the Environmental Sociology that is the study of societal environmental interactions, including the causes of environmental problems and their impacts, ways to solve problems, and even how conditions come to be viewed as problems. This is an interesting issue that many environmental issues but not to exclude the human behaviour may affect the choice of venue of an event.

The event management, as suggested by Silvers (2003), is the process by which an event is planned, prepared, and produced. As with any other form of management, it encompasses the assessment, definition, acquisition, allocation, direction, control, and analysis of time, finances, people, products, services, and other resources to achieve objectives. Practically, Damm (2010) proposed that practitioners tend to focus on the design, planning and coordination of the event rather than the theories that underpin its management. It is the case in Indonesia that not many studies have been completed in the field of event, and it is mostly due to the fact that tourism studies are recently recognized as a science. Thus, many event management companies rarely use the existing event management theory.

Studies around the world about event may have different impact and outcomes. The study of Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) Model was developed by researchers involved from Canada, South Africa, and Australia. This study was performed with the objectives to find out if the site selection was well determined for the event studied. The theory in question is the Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) Model suggested by Silvers (2003). This study is limited to this special event

management and in an Indonesian's professional environment with special characteristic of multicultural involvement in the study.

### **Research Objective**

Objective of the research is to analyze the applicability of EMBOK Model on the event industry in Indonesia. The result of the study will be able to be used further as assistance to a special event management that indirectly contributes to the economic development of Indonesia.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Event Industry**

As part of tourism, event is identified to be experienced and remembered by McCartney (2010: 6) who suggests that events are essentially an assembly or reunion of people for private or public celebration, ritual or remembrance. Event has been previously defined by Getz (1997: 4), as temporary occurrences, either planned or unplanned. Thus, the needs to define events are answered by Getz in two different researches that clearly emphasize the importance of planned event. To describe the difference between unplanned and planned events, the word event is preceded by the word 'special', to indicate a human element; therefore a special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside a normal program (Getz, 1997: 4).

In addition, Goldblatt (2008) mentioned the advantage of planned event who defined that eventology is the study of planned events to promote positive societal benefits. A very interesting truth from Getz (2008: 404) about the uniqueness of an event that much of the appeal of events is that they are never be the same, and you have 'to be there' to enjoy the unique experience fully; if you miss it, it's a lost opportunity. The planned events of our lives often give us purpose and bring us together to achieve common positive goals (Goldblatt, 2011: 11). People attend events because of the opportunity for an entertainment, educational, cultural or enrichment experience, or to satisfy social, business, or political obligations (Silvers, 2008: 7).

## Event Planning and Event Management

Event Planning gives you a blueprint for planning and executing special events with flair and without any unexpected surprises and expenses (Allen, 2009: 14). As we know that it is very important in any management studies that planning is the first step to be executed before others. To plan, organise and run an event, you will need time to investigate, research and plan; you will need methods to help you with that investigation and research, and you will need to possess or 'buy in' a variety of skills (Conway, 2006: 2-3). Getz (2007: 18) substantiated that the world of planned events is diverse and exciting, with almost unlimited scope for variety in form, function and event experiences.

Thus, event management as proposed by Getz (2008: 404) is the applied field of study and area of professional practice devoted to the design, production and management of planned events, encompassing festivals and other celebrations, entertainment, recreation, political and state, scientific, sport and arts events, those in the domain of business and corporate affairs (including meetings, conventions, fairs, and exhibition), and those in the private domain (including rites of passage such as wedding and parties, and social events for affinity groups). Thus, it is essential for managing event to possess experience and knowledge in different fields according to the type of event. Conway (2006:13) amplified that to plan, organize and run an event, you will need time to investigate, research and plan; you will need methods to help you with that investigation and research, and you will need to possess or 'buy in' a variety of skills. This variety of skills is definitely within different fields.

Event management is a ubiquitous word in modern society (Damm, 2010, iv). To describe about the position of event management worldwide, (Arcodia and Robb, 2000:159) tells that the literature on event management is still in its early stages of development in comparison to other service industries. Silvers *et al.* (2006:185) stated that event management is a multidisciplinary occupation in an exciting and growing industry. It attracts persons who possess creative talents and organizational skills. In the same perspective, McCartney

(2010: 6) has also proposed event management as multidisciplinary phenomenon, but in more specifically McCartney emphasized that event management is involving marketing, catering, finance, security, and risk management, logistics and human resource management, among other discipline.

A good event management is not the only element for the success of an event. McCartney (2010: 339) proposes that the event management should be based on the attractiveness and relevance of the event theme, because he does consider that it is a major factor in the event's success. McCartney also sees that to ensure the smooth running of the event, considerations that support and enhance theme should be incorporated by the theme. Needs Assessment is the technique used to define the intention, obligations, audience, and attributes of an event project (Silvers *et al.*, 2006).

## Event Management Body of Knowledge Model

A special event is a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs and a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body (Getz, 1997; Goldblatt, 2002). Silvers has been one of the researchers in the development of the Event Management Body of Knowledge, known as EMBOK. The EMBOK is known as a three dimensional description of the knowledge and skills essential to create, develop and deliver an event. The International EMBOK (Event Management Body of Knowledge) Model was developed by Silvers (2004), a conceptual framework including processes, phases, core values, and function or knowledge domains that may be customized to meet the needs of various users including governments, academe, and industry practitioners.

The phases of event management illustrate its sequential nature, highlighting the criticality of time in any event project as it gathers momentum toward the event itself (Silvers, 2008: 13) that consists of initiation, planning, implementation, the event, and closure. Silvers (2005) also proposed that as part of EMBOK Model event management is

made up of five areas of management called domains, which are design, administration, marketing, operations, and risk.

In the study of EMBOK, Silvers (2007) suggests that the Taxonomy of Operations Knowledge Domain has the unit of Site Management with the topics of ceremonial equipment, décor, environmental controls, equipment rentals, furnishings, maps, mobile facilities, perimeter controls, signage, site development, site inspection criteria, site plans / diagrams, site selection criteria, site selection / contracting, staging equipment, storage, temporary structures, and tenting. Thus, it is appeared that site selection criteria is one of important elements in the Site Management.

### **Criteria of Site Selection**

It is curiously happening that the site selection has different criteria to be chosen. The planner of an event is expected to be responsible for researching and visiting potential event sites and then reporting their findings to all those involved in the decision (Fawzy, 2008; Fawzy and Samra, 2008; Hilliard and Baloglu, 2008; Rompf, Breiter and Severt, 2008; Tsai and Ho, 2009). McGurgan et al. (2011) suggests that the attitude of staff, size of the venue, venue ambiance, and the first impression of the venue are the most important site selection criteria for special events, while infrastructure (services put in place for residents to use- i.e. transportation, medical facilities, etc.) and superstructure (services or amenities put in place for tourists- i.e. hotels, restaurants, etc.) within a destination tend to either help or hurt a venue during site selection due to the need for various amenities as suggested by Rompf, Breiter and Severt (2008) and Tsai and Ho, (2009). Ease of accessibility and ample leisure activities to partake in encouraged planners to select one destination over another (Rompf, Breiter and Severt, 2008; Tsai and Ho, 2009). Mc Grugen et al. (2011) also confirmed that the venue of an event is crucial to the overall success of the event.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study is a practice based research described in a descriptive method that is developed to study a special event management. As a practice-based-research, this event was planned to be a one-time special event to be evaluated its success to becoming an annual event. The second event was a probationary for the event's owner to see the successful of the event in terms of number and quality of the visitors as well as the number of visitors employed by the exhibitors. However, the researcher focused to find out the interests of the visitors to visit the event comparing to the first event.

The research methodology used in this study is the descriptive method using ethnography which according to Stadler, Reid and Fullagar (2013) includes participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews with the assumptions to focus on the site selection of the event, and involving the authors in the event itself to obtain primary data collection and analysis with a descriptive way of writing. As a method of qualitative research, participant observation is recognised as appropriate for gathering data on interactions and relationships through the recording of behaviour, conversation, and experience in situ (Van Maanen, 1995).

Qualitative researchers operate under six assumptions (Merriam, 1988, 19-20): (1) The focus of the research is on the process rather than outcomes; (2) The research has an interest in meaning – how people make sense of their lives, or what is happening around them; (3) The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and the data are mediated through this instrument; (4) Research involves fieldwork; (5) Research is descriptive, seeking meaning or understanding; and (6) Research is inductive, building concepts, theory, and abstractions from the details (Mair, Whitford and Mackellar, 2013: 57).

### **Variables and Measurement**

In this study, the EMBOK Model is used to look for the result, with the variables of site management in the operation domain. To

measure the variables, this study will be using descriptive method with the support of observation and analysis of both events. In the process of determination of the venue, it is as well mentioned by Silvers *et al.* (2006) that a Needs Assessment is the technique used to define the intention, obligations, audience, and attributes of an event project, it encompasses asking the 5 W's: who, what, when, where, and why. Silvers *et al.* (2006) also emphasized that the answers to the 5 W's will direct HOW to develop and produce the event. Thus, the research questions are developed based on the theory of needs assessment which includes the indicators of site selection. The 'who' in the variable is represented by the visitors who are the respondents and the event owner as the decision maker.

Table 1. The Variable and Measurement.

Variable	Indicators	Scale	Resource
Why	Purpose	Nomina	Silvers (2006)
	Goal and Role	1	
	Objectives	Ordinal	
What	Activities	Nomina	Silvers (2006)
	Format	1	
	Resources	Ordinal	
When	Date	Nomina	Silvers (2006)
	Time	1	
	Duration	Ordinal	
	Schedule		
Where	Location	Nomina	Silvers (2006)
	Spatial	1	
	Dimension	Ordinal	
	Logistics		

The operational definition of the variables is defined through questions asked to the respondent to obtain their opinion focused on the venue choice. The 'why' was structured into the question sentence to find out the objectives of the visitors to join the event: *Why do you come to this event?* The 'what' is structured into the question to find out the attractive criterion of the venue chosen: *What is the criterion of the event venue that suits your requirements to come to this event?* The 'when' was mostly to find out the reaction of the respondents towards the attractiveness of the promotion to the impact of going to the event: *When you saw that the information that this event is held in this venue, were you*

*willing to go? Why?* The 'where' is to identify the preference of the visitors to join the kind of event organized: *Where is the event venue that you prefer to hold this kind of event?*

The total number of respondents from the first REA being interviewed by the researchers is 45 visitors out of 389 registered visitors, while at the second REA, the number of visitors interviewed is 54 out of 782 registered visitors. Besides the visitors, the researcher was part of the event committee that allows the closed observation in the organization of the event.

## Results and Discussion

### Overview of the Event

The *Rencontre Enreprise Alumni* was designed to be organized with different activities which are job fair as exhibition, seminars from different corporate companies and education institutions, and a gala dinner for the alumni of Indonesian students and residents in France gathered in an association called *Ikatan Alumni Prancis Indonesia (IAPI)*. This event was categorized special event because in the beginning, the objective was to organize a networking event between the French community and companies in Indonesia that was expected to be beneficial for young Indonesian.

Learning from the experience of the first event, due to several reasons, the second event kept the job fair while the seminar program was eliminated. In addition to that, the venue was considered by the event owner as one of the indicators of the event success that they thought it would be wise to change the character of the venue from a five star hotel to a more accessible venue for the Indonesian students, graduates, and also the members of the association.

Both events were organized in same special province of Jakarta, with different areas of venues. This first event was held in a five star hotel in the south of Jakarta, while the second one was held in a reception hall of a government institution building. The visitors of both events gave interesting reasons of their visit related to the venue chosen regardless the purpose and content of the event, even though it was also part of the reasons.

The site selection process will typically begin once the goals and objectives of the event are determined to ensure the best potential venue is chosen (Rompf, Breiter and Severt, 2008). In depth interview was performed with the event owner's representative as well as organizers. As experienced at the first event, the event owner considered that a five star hotel was inappropriate for such event because the expected audience would not feel comfortable of the high standard. The comprehension of not being able to have suitable appearance was one of the barriers to the potential visitors to come. Transportation was considered very important to the successful of the event. Limited public transport in some remote areas in Jakarta may be a barrier for potential visitors to come.

Thus, recognizing the first event failure site selection, for the second event, the event owner decided to organize the event in the main avenue of the city center in a more familiar building for the targeted audience. However, the organization required more attention and supervision since it was a public area that is not managed as a function hall. In general, the second event was successful in terms of grabbing doubled number visitors comparing to the first one, but unsuccessful in the number of exhibitors. Moreover, the seminar and presentation sessions from the corporate companies were taken out from the rundown because no room was available to organize them.

### Visitors

Besides the event owner, the visitors were contacted for in depth interview. The answers of the respondents from the visitors were with various points of view nonetheless they were quite similar with the preference of transportation issue. To summarize the result, the researcher regrouped the answers with the following summary.

Table 2. The Summary of 'Why'

Why do you come to this event?

Answers from REA 1	% Number of Answer	Answers from REA 2	% Number of Answer
Would like to see what are offered	27,8%	Get information about industry	16,7%
Invited by a friend to come	22,3%	Would like to see what are offered	16,7%
Need a job	22,3%	Need a job	66,7%
Curious	27,8%		

The visitors of the second are more targeted. There are more job seeker in the second event comparing to the first one. There were more curious visitors in the first event rather than the ones who really need a job. At the first event, the strategy of the event information was by word of mouth especially by alumni that is gathered at the association.

Table 3. Summary of 'When'

When you saw that the information that this event is held in this venue, were you willing to go? Why?

Answers from REA 1	% Number of Answer	Answers from REA 2	% Number of Answer
Hesitate, because difficult to reach the area	16,7%	Feel secured that the event is supported by a government institution	11,1%
Hesitate, because too luxury	11,2%	I know the place well	27,8%
Yes, because I have to	11,2%	Good area, easy to reach	61,1%
Yes, it is a chance for me to go to see how the hotel is	11,2%		
Yes, curious	16,7%		
Yes, I need to grab the chance in the moment	22,3%		
Yes, just visit the companies to networking	22,3%		

The second event seemed to be more successful in terms of the attractiveness of the promotion. The venue attracted them more to come rather than the first event. The first event gave hesitation due to the luxury brand that frightened the public to visit. The fact that the venue was easy to reach was very important to the visitors.

Table 4. Summary of 'When'

What was the criterion of the event venue that suits your requirements to come to this event?

Answers from REA 1	% Number of Answer	Answers from REA 2	% Number of Answer
A great luxury hotel	16,7%	Ambiance of the venue	16,7%
Easy to visit by car/taxi	11,2%	Familiar with the area and the environment of the venue	22,2%
Elegant place and very classy	11,2%	Safety of the public transportation	27,8%
Good choice of venue, but too luxury for people who look for a job	11,2%	Closed to public transportation	83,3%
Many rooms inside and can be focused when asking information from the companies	11,2%		
Nice decoration	11,2%		
Nice hotel	52,1%		
Well managed rooms with good signage and continuous information	61,2%		

The first event was organized in a five star hotel in Jakarta that amazed most visitors. The elegance, luxurious, and nice atmosphere of the hotel were the criterion to come to the event. Contrarily happening to the first event, in the second event, the visitors did not seem care about the quality of the venue but they did prefer because of the transportation nearby. Public transportation seemed very important to the visitors.

Table 5. Summary of 'Where'

Where is the event venue that you prefer to hold this kind of event?

Recapitulation of the Answers	% Number of Answer	Answers from REA 2	% Number of Answer
In the central of Jakarta and not too luxury	11,2%	Like this one, but more comfortable with small rooms for seminar sessions	5,6%
A wider space and more familiar with the target visitors	16,7%	A more French ambience place and more sound proof room because it is too noisy	5,6%
Easy to go, with less traffic jam problem	16,7%	A more secluded rooms to discuss well with the companies	16,7%
Nice and comfortable for both visitors and exhibitors	72,2%	More sound proof room because it is too noisy	16,7%
Easy to access by public transport	77,8%	Easy to reach by public transportation and large parking area	72,2%

The result of the visitors' preference in this limited research is clearly stated for both events that easy access to the venue is very important. In additional to the easy access and

closed to public transportation, a large parking area was also required.

The questions were designed as open questions to all respondents to find fairly what they really think about the site selection. The result of the research is quite interesting that almost all respondents from both events were having the same pattern of opinion. The findings are very interesting in the visitors' behavior of job fair exhibition in Jakarta. For the first event, the result specifies that the reasons of visiting the event were various. Most of them curiously came for other purposes than looking for a job as it is the event objective. Thus, their opinion in regards to the selection of the venue cannot be considered for further research. However, the second event leads to attention-grabbing result, because they came to the event with just the same purpose as the event was organized for. This is encouraging for the researcher to digging down the venue preference of the visitors.

For such special event with job fair activities, easy access by public transport and large parking area are considered very important by the visitors. It does make sense because the job seekers in general use public transport or motorcycle as their transportation. Since a comprehensive public transport in Jakarta is still under construction nowadays, there are so many young generation uses motorcycle than public transportation to move from one place to another.

This research confirmed the views of the event owner in selecting the event venue. The most important indicators of site selection for such event are the easy access, the availability of the public transportation, as well as the availability of rooms with different activities such as seminar and presentation. Other issues such as comfortable and the ambience of the venue through nice decoration were considered important as well in the determination of the venue.

## Conclusion

Venue of a special event for such specific event is found to be selected by taking into account not only the preference of the event owner, but should also be selected according to the visitors' interest. The access to an event

venue is very important especially in such big city like Jakarta, which public transportation are still developing with the construction of Mass Rapid Transportation and other method of transportation such as bus. The lack of well managed public transportation resulted to a huge number of motorcycle on Jakarta's streets. In this case, the site selection preference that required a large area of parking may due to this issue. It can be concluded that the site should be selected at first according to the targeted visitors, then to the targeted exhibitors.

The selection criteria of an event venue may also with regards to the facilities that may affect the ambience of the event. Some venues may not be suitable to organize the event because of the level of difficulties in adding attributes to create the ambience. Moreover, the sound in the site area should also be managed to create a good ambience on the event.

In regards to the detail preference of the site selection, there should be further research performed with quantitative research to find out about how comfort are the visitors in coming in to the event.

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