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### **RESTARTING MICE EVENTS AFTER COVID-19: A LOOK AT READINESS, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES TO RESTART**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak from March 2020 until 2021 brought great losses to all business sectors including the MICE industry. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a stringent analysis on the need to restart MICE events, as it is part of the adaptability, recovery, and resilience of the events industry. For this reason, the content of webinars streamed live on open-access platforms such as YouTube as well as event companies' websites or their Facebook pages between Jan 2021 and October 2021 were reviewed and analysed. The speakers and panellists of the selected webinars are experts in event management. The majority of them are established industry practitioners and key people in their respective organisations. As the main decision-makers of their companies, their thoughts and perceptions are valid and relevant as they can determine their companies' policy. By exploring their individual experiences and roles in handling COVID-19, a holistic understanding of crisis management can be obtained. The results of the content analysis suggest three main themes to be considered before restarting MICE events such as readiness, challenges and strategies to restart the MICE business. This knowledge would greatly assist the companies in restarting their business operation during a crisis.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Challenges, MICE events, Readiness, Strategies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The first outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease or COVID-19 took place in Wuhan, China and to date, has spread to more than 100 countries and killed innumerable people worldwide. Apart from causing millions of fatalities, COVID-19 has also significantly changed the lives of people worldwide. The impact of COVID-19 is widespread in all aspects such as healthcare, economy, social and livelihoods (OECD, 2020). It also significantly affected the landscape of the global event sector (Ziakas et al., 2021), in particular Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition (MICE) events. Many MICE events were cancelled and postponed worldwide. For instance, in 2020 alone, the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) have had to cancel and postpone 62 conventions and exhibitions (MyCEB, 2021). The Malaysian Reserve (TMR), an online business news and information provider also reported that due to COVID-19, over 1,250 MICE events in Malaysia had to be cancelled and postponed resulting in over RM1.75 billion losses (Kamel, 2020). The cancellations and postponements of events complied with the safety guidelines released by World Health Organization (WHO).

According to WHO, the best way to prevent and slow down the transmission of COVID-19 was through social distancing, avoiding mass gatherings, staying home as well as self-isolating (WHO, 2021), and unfortunately, these precautionary measures are the opposite of the nature of MICE events that gather large numbers of people at one time, in a specific place for specific purposes. For example, Rwigema (2020) stated that social distancing is the very opposite of the nature of MICE events. Besides, travel restrictions and closed international borders further compounded the situation (Aburumman, 2020; Indika, 2021) leading to considerable financial losses in the event and tourism sector (Mohanty et al., 2020). The fact that events spread infectious diseases (i.e. COVID-19; Zika virus) has also been widely discussed in the event literature (Aburumman, 2020; Al-Shaery et al., 2021; Indika, 2021; Mohanty et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Parnell et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). Indeed, events that gather many people at one time, in a specific place expose many to infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19 (Mohanty et al., 2020).

Despite the massive discussion regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the events industry, there have been limited studies that examine how MICE events can make a comeback post COVID-19. Indeed, before restarting any business, it is vital to obtain knowledge about the readiness, challenges as well as strategies on restarting. Having a proper plan in place for restarting can help MICE organisers reduce further losses. Strategies for restarting event businesses are also significant as a guideline for the future (Disimulacion, 2021; Ludvigsen & Hayton, 2020). This study is important as it helps to quicken the recovery and transformation of the MICE sector (Rwigema, 2020) as COVID-19 has brought the MICE sector to a complete standstill and the sector now requires an urgent recovery (Ho & Sia, 2020). Disimulacion (2021) also validated the need for specific studies to identify the strategies to rejuvenate MICE events. Additionally, this study is important because there is a dearth of studies focusing on crisis management preparation in the hospitality industry (Bremser et al., 2018), particularly for events, which are significant tourism products. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in understanding the restarting of the MICE business during times of crisis. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to highlight the strategy that can be employed by MICE companies to restart their business.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The majority of the literature that discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the MICE industry agreed that COVID-19 had caused an uncountable number of cancellations and postponements of the meeting,

incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (Mohanty et al., 2020; Rwigema, 2020) and event organisation was severely restricted (Ebrahim et al., 2020). Most MICE events are planned very much in advance according to their size and types. Therefore, the cancellations and postponements led to huge economic losses and job cuts worldwide. Catastrophic losses were recorded when mega-events such as Olympics 2020 and EURO 2020 Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) had to be postponed (Ludvigsen & Hayton, 2020).

### **MICE events and the impacts of its cancellation and postponement**

The impact from the postponement of these mega-events was inconceivable as their planning involved many stakeholders, which took years. The rescheduling of these mega sports events to unspecified future dates led to a period of financial uncertainty for the sector (Ludvigsen & Hayton, 2020). As an example, the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Rwanda, Africa forced the government to ban international and domestic tourists. Consequently, Rwanda's MICE industry incurred losses over 48 million USD (Rwigema, 2020). According to Ludvigsen and Hayton (2020), COVID-19 left an unprecedented and unclear mark on the event sector. Indeed, researchers such as McCloskey et al. (2020) and Ebrahim et al. (2020) verified that hosting events during COVID-19 are risky and complex as there are specific guidelines to be followed. These guidelines include cancellation of events that can potentially turn into a super spreader, using social distancing to reduce direct and close contact, minimising the number of participants and many more. The cancellation and postponement of MICE events not only affected the events industry per se, but also affected other related sectors such as tourism (Mohanty et al., 2020), hospitality (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020) as well as the food industry. Restarting MICE events is important. According to the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model (Butler, 1980), if no action is taken during the downturn of a business, that particular area will enter the declining stage due to declining demand. The final stage of TALC represents possible solutions for rejuvenation to avoid decline. Depending on the plan and actions of the business, if nothing is done, there may be a permanent decline in the event market.

### **The readiness to restart MICE events**

The role of MICE events as a socioeconomic catalyst that produces a massive multiplier effect is undeniable for most countries worldwide. MICE events not only help millions of small and medium enterprise companies, but also acts as a catalyst and multiplier effect for the economy. Realising the significant contribution of the MICE sector to the local economy, Ho and Sia (2020) have highlighted that, the failure of MICE organisers to be proactive and adapt to COVID-19 would put the state's economy at risk. The effects of COVID-19 were indeed unexpected but very real. Once thought implausible, everyone in the world today is now adapting and trying to live with COVID-19. Adapting to the new normal means continuing daily life tasks and functions as usual but with the incorporation of some new procedures and norms. The readiness of people as event attendees to live with the new norm reflects the readiness from the demand side. However, despite the returning demand, the MICE business can still fail if the suppliers are not ready. In the MICE event sector, MICE organisers are considered suppliers. The related stakeholders are also considered suppliers. Therefore, the readiness of these two entities to bring back MICE events is crucial because there is still limited work that discusses the MICE organisers' survival (Aburumman, 2020).

Beginning April 2022, most countries including Malaysia have decided to reopen their international borders. The reopening of international borders was the most long-awaited news by everyone, including

MICE providers and attendees. Nevertheless, all MICE providers and attendees were required to abide by the rules and regulations set by each particular country. For Malaysia, MyCEB highlighted that Malaysia's border reopening was crucial for the recovery of the business events sector (MyCEB, 2022). The Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS) also emphasised that border reopening could reactivate and boost business events again ("Reopen borders", 2022). With some restrictions on selected groups, Japan was ready and among the earliest to restart MICE events when the government decided to reopen its border for foreign travellers (Japan Travel News, 2022). New Zealand was another country that was ready for early border reopening. Its MICE authority, Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA), was confident that the reopening of borders would help the business events and hospitality sector to recuperate. BEIA was also positive about having face- to-face events as they were starting their recovery by rebuilding, re-hiring and re-energising their events industry (Australasian Special Events News, 2022).

### **The challenges to restarting MICE events**

Many MICE organisers and their stakeholders look forward to restarting MICE events. Restarting business events is also significant for long-term positive returns (Restarting Business, 2021). Despite the advantages of restarting MICE events, there are foreseen challenges as discussed in the literature. According to Aburumman (2020), a main hurdle to restarting MICE events is that many people still fear to travel. Moreover, Williams and Santos (2021) posited that restarting MICE becomes more challenging because COVID-19 has affected the MICE event sector significantly including extreme revenue loss. Hence, the recovery process might take longer (Williams & Santos, 2021).

The need to change the event platform from physical to virtual is also a challenge for most MICE organisers. In addition, the facilitation of informal spaces for social interaction is another major challenge for virtual events (Foramitti et al., 2021). Virtual event organisers often fail to provide an avenue for effective engagement among attendees, which contradicts the purpose and nature of MICE events as such events are meant to provide ample socialization opportunities for attendees to mingle and network (Kerton, 2021). Foramitti et al. (2021) also verified that social interactions during virtual events were low, which defeated one of the objectives of MICE events. To summarize, the challenges vary according to the types of events hosted. For physical events, potential attendees' fear of travel can lead to revenue loss, while virtual events may reduce attendee engagement.

### **The strategies to restart MICE events**

The strategic changes in the operations of the hospitality sector including events is crucial, even more especially after the COVID-19 crisis (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). The strategies, mainly on how to restart business events, are important for the survival of MICE organizers. However, the operational strategies need to take into account consistent and strict compliance with COVID-19's SOP for health and safety protocols (Disimulacion, 2021). Going virtual is one of the strategies that is famously and widely practiced by MICE organisers worldwide (Indika, 2021). Some of the event companies also regarded going virtual as a part of their business experiment (Williams & Santos, 2021). Hence, online meetings received an extra boost due to COVID-19 (Williams & Santos, 2021). Even before the COVID-19 crisis, Pearlman and Gates (2010) had already highlighted the use of virtual meetings and special events as one of the strategies to host an event. Following the global trend, the Japan Convention Management

Association (JCMA) also emphasized the need to host virtual events to avoid the postponement and cancellation of earlier planned events. Going virtual was an option to counter the spread of COVID-19 together with cashless payments and, online reservation systems (JCMA, 2021). However, according to Williams and Santos (2021), going online is not the ultimate strategy to restart the MICE businesses. In 2021, JCMA for example, produced a guideline on hosting MICE events during COVID- 19. The guideline of precautionary procedures during and after events was a tangible proof of the readiness to restart the MICE business within Japan (JCMA, 2021). However, based on the authors' personal observations, the recovery of the event sector was lagging when compared to other similar sectors such as tourism and hotel due to more initiatives were taken by the government to recover the tourism industry, including financial aid, redirection of hotel marketing, sales programs, and many other promotional measures.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

As mentioned earlier, this study aims to identify strategies to restart MICE events after being badly hit by COVID-19. The study acknowledges the temporal context of the data collection, as it was conducted during a period when international borders were closed due to the crisis. Because of Movement Control Order (MCO) to stem COVID-19, any work related to research activities including data gathering became limited. Therefore, webinars became one of the new sources to collect qualitative data (Tiong & Fen, 2020). As empirical research on restarting MICE events remains scarce, this study aims to explore this issue. The content of webinars streamed live on open-access platforms such as YouTube, as well as companies' websites or their Facebook pages between January 2021 and October 2021, were reviewed and analyzed. Since the webinars were publicly published, copyright issues are not a cause for concern, as the panelists shared their thoughts and expert knowledge for the benefit of the public. The scope of this study is limited to webinars, particularly live web-based video conferences. However, it is encouraging to note that since April 2022, several countries, including Malaysia, have initiated the phased reopening of their borders.

Moreau (2017, p. 3) defined a webinar as "a live web-based video conference that uses the internet to connect the individual hosting the webinar to an audience, the viewers and listeners of the webinar from all over the world. Hosts can show themselves speaking, switch to their computer screens for slideshows or demonstrations, and even invite guests from other locations to co-host the webinar with them". The identification and selection of the webinars involved two stages. The first stage involved searching for webinars using words or terms that carry the same meaning as "restart". Among the keywords used included "transition", "rejuvenating", "restarting", as well as "reinventing". The words "business event" and "MICE" were used interchangeably as these two terms denote the same type of event. This process identified 22 webinars. The screening in the second stage involved reviewing the main emphasis of the webinar discussion. At the end of the screening process, three webinars, consisting of 11 panellists were finalised for the interpretation process as the core focus of these three webinars was on COVID-19 and restarting events. Table 1 lists the three selected webinars for analysis. The panellists, who were the respondents for this study, were assigned code numbers based on their speaking order in the webinars. Respondents included MICE experts from various countries, each providing rich data due to their diverse roles within their companies. Triangulation, involving three different webinars with 11 panellists, ensured the validity and reliability of the data. The varied roles of the respondents offered a balanced representation of different perspectives within the MICE industry. The data obtained were manually analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a valuable method for exploring people's beliefs, knowledge, experiences, or values when analyzing qualitative data, such as interview transcripts, social media profiles, or survey results (Caulfield, 2023). This method was used to synthesize the information from the webinars into specific categories.

**Table 1**

*Selected Webinars and Panellists' Positions for Analysis*

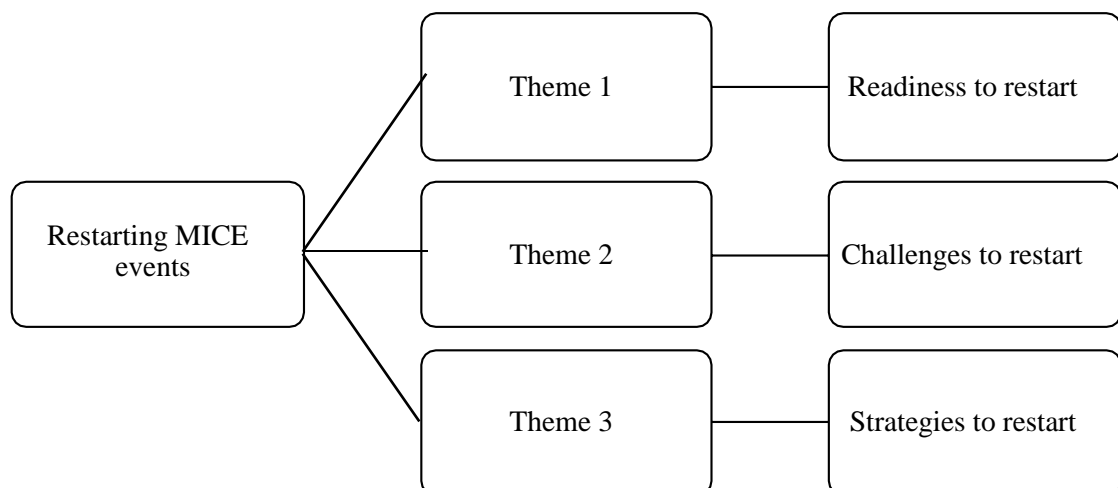
<b>Webinar</b>	<b>Panellist</b>	<b>Position</b>
Webinar 1	Panellist 1	Marketing Senior Director
	Panellist 3	Chief Executive Officer
Webinar 2	Panellist 4	Executive Director
	Panellist 5	Social Media Strategist
	Panellist 6	Vice President
Webinar 3	Panellist 7	Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
	Panellist 8	President of an Exhibition and Conference Association
	Panellist 9	Managing Director
	Panellist 10	International Business Director
	Panellist 11	University Professor

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings from thematic analysis indicate that there are three main aspects to be considered before restarting MICE events, that is, readiness to restart, challenges as well as strategies to restart. Readiness is important as it prepares organisers to restart their businesses in the new normal as COVID-19 had drastically changed the event landscape (Ziakas et al., 2021). These three themes corroborate with a few past empirical studies including Ludvigsen & Hayton (2020). These studies, which were discussed earlier, examined the readiness, challenges as well as the coping strategies to restart business events after the crisis. Hence, this paper contributes further to the existing literature and serves as an important guideline for many MICE organisers that may have lost direction and are struggling after being hit by COVID-19. These findings are not only relevant for post-COVID-19 businesses, but can be a vital resource for future crisis management. Figure 1 and the following subsections depict and discuss the findings.

**Figure 1**

*Three major themes on restarting MICE events*





### **Theme 1: Readiness to restart**

The readiness to restart was the main point of discussion among the panellists with many highlighting the need to revert to normality as a main priority. A comprehensive analysis of the panellists' discussion found that the readiness to restart MICE takes place at different levels including country or state level, organisational level, societal level and individual level. Panellist 7 contended that the readiness to restart should begin with the government that represents the country or state level. The government has the power to allow events to take place. The panellist further described that *"we have to adapt the delivery method of the events; hence hoping for the government to change the policy; we deserve and need support from the government"*.

Next, the readiness at the organisational level is critical because they are the most strongly affected by the crisis. To restart, MICE companies need to thoroughly consider their restarting strategies. The perceptions of crises such as COVID-19 influenced the panellists' responses. Panellist 1 positively considered COVID-19 as a *"wakeup call, hence need to find a practical solution"*. There is consistency between this expert's opinion and literature. For example, Kerton (2021) agreed that event organisers need to seek companies that are experts in providing robust virtual event platforms. This reflects the readiness of the organisers to restart as they prepare to adopt changes in business operations.

With regards to readiness to restart at the society level, Panellist 1 observed that due to worries of traveling, the demand for online meetings had increased. During COVID-19 or perhaps future crises, people might be quarantined in their houses. Hence, people need alternatives such as virtual MICE events. Panellist 1 stated, *"people search for something to fulfil their leisure time through virtual events"*. The collective responses from individuals form the acceptance of society towards MICE events. Panellist 1 stated that *"people crave to meet in person"*, hence as a decision-maker in organising events, the person may *"try new things, experiment the technique, try to find the best practices"* to host events during COVID-19.

### **Theme 2: Challenges to restart MICE events**

The challenges for restarting MICE events are real, and it was admitted by most of the panellists who are established practitioners of MICE events. The challenges can be divided into five types, which are: 1) unpredictable output of MICE events after COVID-19; 2) sustaining the company's principles; 3) provision and delivery of effective attendee engagement; 4) requirement to maintain and adapt to new technologies and finally, 5) compulsory government rules and regulations compliance.

#### ***Unpredictable Output of MICE events after COVID-19***

The perishable and inconsistent nature of MICE events, in terms of output, makes it difficult for the organiser to produce the same level of experience, enjoyment, and excitement for event attendees (Yang, 2011). The transmission risks of COVID-19 makes event organising more challenging because a MICE event itself requires extensive discussions, socialisation, and social interactions among participants (Trišić & Bojovic, 2018). In this respect, Panellist 8, highlighted *"How long to take to transform the event? There is no specific answer; it depends on the format/ platform/strategy/audience of the event to be used – We should have the content ready, and know what our audience wants"*. This statement underpins the various outputs of MICE events that are set to pose a challenge for organisers when they start organising events again.

### ***Provision of effective engagement***

A MICE event is about engagement; as such, the failure to keep attendees engaged, whether in the event programme or among the attendees, indicates the failure of the organisers. When the various expectations of attendees are not met or are below par, this is considered a failed event as well. Therefore, when the majority of MICE organisers decided to shift a physical event to a virtual platform, the biggest problem faced was how to maintain the same level of engagement. In highlighting that *“the bigger challenge of going online is people cannot socialize, human require to get back and socialize”*, Panellist 2 agreed that engagement through online events is difficult. This statement corroborates with that of Kerton’s (2021) where she found that virtual events provided limited chances of networking and lacked a sense of togetherness. Hence, to address the issue of absent or inadequate engagement, Panellist 6 suggested to *“design an event that provides our product, help people to connect online; inspire the audience to have more ideas; sharing and collaboration, partnering, in compelling entertaining environments”*.

### ***Pressure to adopt and adapt to changes in business operations***

To sustain their business during a crisis, MICE organisers are left with little option but to willingly adopt and adapt to changes in their operations. One of the changes include changing physical events into online events. Panellist 2 described the situation by saying *“stop thinking about-face to face at the moment, focus on what we can deliver in the digital environment”*. However, not all MICE organisers are willing to adopt and adapt to the changes in their operations. Panellist 7 contended that the *“whole industry under pressure; the event sector was the first to be affected and the last to be opened”*. Panellist 2 also lamented, *“it is difficult for this industry to restart because it involves many people, such as government, supplier, and stakeholders. Everyone needs to be ready. It’s all over-controlled”*. Virtual events which depend on technical facilities such as video streaming and online discussions further put pressure on the organisers because *“while the medium changes; the basic principles of events do not!”* (Panellist 6).

## **Theme 3: Strategies to restart MICE events**

Given the readiness and challenges to restart, MICE organisers have to identify efficient strategies to restart their businesses as insufficient preparation will only make things worse. Being unprepared may lead to failure in fulfilling the event objectives and increase the frustration of the attendees. Five strategies emerged from the majority of the panellists’ responses, which can be used by MICE organisers as a guideline to restart their businesses.

### ***Event digitalisation***

Event digitalisation was identified as the most efficient strategy during crises including COVID-19. Out of 11 panellists, 82% of the panellists agreed on going digital (i.e. Panellist 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). Panellist 2 considered COVID-19 as a wake-up call; hence, the need to find a practical solution, and going digital was one of the innovative ways. He advised, *“Stop thinking about face-to-face at the moment, focus on what we can deliver in the digital environment”*. This statement is in line with research conducted by a Russian MICE consultant, educational and design company in 2021. The company found that moving physical events unto the digital platform during COVID-19 is a new normal, hence MICE organisers should not ignore this approach (MICE Orchestra, 2021). This finding also resonates with other recent findings (Foramitti et al., 2021; Rwigema, 2020) whereby virtual events were a good substitute for physical events during the crisis. However, the percentage of MICE organisers that host virtual events, especially in Russia is still low (MICE Orchestra, 2021). MICE organisers can also refer to a number of existing studies that provide guidelines on



how to produce good virtual events. Among the studies related to virtual events are Foramitti et al. (2021), Kerton (2021), Kim (2021), NC State University (2020), Ramely et al. (2021), Rubinger et al. (2020), Ton and Le (2021), Westmattmann et al. (2021) and many more.

### ***Strategic business partnership***

The different nature of MICE organisers that provide different services such as meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions provides opportunities for them to offer unique and value-added services during crises, such as COVID-19. The uniqueness of their event programme can be a competitive advantage against other MICE providers. However, in cases where the company may not have the right expertise or personnel to design a unique event programme, they can form partnerships with other suppliers that can help to achieve the event's goal and objective. Panellist 8 recommended this by saying, *"now is the time to communicate, brainstorm how to recover and restart the education among our people"*.

Due to the unprecedented changes caused by COVID-10 to the event landscape, some event companies are left struggling and lost in managing and developing their businesses. Therefore, forming partnerships to complement and support each other's weakness is crucial. Panellist 5 urged MICE organisers to find complementary partners who are established in areas that they lack expertise: *"partner with professionals; people that understand the technology and the people"*. If an inexperienced company decides to host a virtual event, they have to seek help from an experienced partner. Panellist 6 highlighted that *"work with stakeholders on how to engage in the content of the event that depends on the audience"*. In short, a good partnership can aid in fulfilling the objectives of any virtual event, which are normally difficult to achieve during COVID-19, due to various precautionary rules and regulations.

### ***Readiness to adopt and adapt to new norms***

The readiness to adopt and adapt to new norms among MICE organisers indicates their readiness to restart their business. Panellist 4 stated that *"Now is the best time to transform, we should create space to innovate/experiment with participants"*. He urged that the only way forward for their business to survive is to host events as soon as possible whilst being clear on the purpose for organising the event and bringing people together.

Panel 2 verified the readiness by saying, *"now is the time to prepare for the worst-case scenario, and ready to adopt new norms. We have to take the necessary precautions"*. Panellist 3 also reflected the same opinion when he mentioned that, *"a successful company doesn't have to spend more on energy, but need to strategies and plan, keep the team's innovation intact"*. In the same way, Panellist 8 highlighted that *"it is important to change the format, be flexible and adapt with artificial intelligence as well as become more digitalised"*.

According to Panellist 6, the strategies to restart should be developed in tandem with the required capabilities that the organiser needs to implement these strategies. With physical restrictions and social distancing in place, MICE organisers should *"upgrade their skills and focus on the core component of virtual events"*. Panellist 6 also reminded that MICE organisers cannot use virtual events as an excuse for not delivering 100% of the contents of face-to-face events: *"the right technology for the right reason and the right events"*.

## CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this paper provide a valuable and comprehensive addition to the limited existing literature on the post-COVID-19 restart of MICE events. By summarizing the insights and perspectives of event experts from different parts of the world, including Africa, Thailand, and Malaysia, the paper offers a global perspective on the challenges and strategies involved in re-establishing the MICE industry. One of the key highlights from the study is the recognition of the significance of the MICE industry as a platform for global partnership and collaboration. The insights gained from event experts shed light on the interdependencies and interconnectedness of stakeholders in the MICE sector, emphasizing the need for collective efforts and shared responsibility in navigating through crises. Another major takeaway from the research is the realization that MICE organizers need to enhance their preparedness for similar crises in the future. The COVID-19 crisis served as a wake-up call, demonstrating the vulnerability of the MICE industry to unforeseen disruptions. To avoid the decline stage of TALC model, the study highlights the importance of developing comprehensive crisis management plans, implementing risk mitigation strategies, and fostering agility and adaptability to respond effectively to future challenges. Overall, the findings and insights provided in this paper contribute not only to academic knowledge but also to practical implications for MICE industry professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders. By examining the experiences and perspectives of event experts from diverse backgrounds, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced and the strategies needed to ensure a resilient and thriving MICE sector in a post- crisis world.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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