

THE MUSIC EVENTS IN KUCHING, SARAWAK POST-PANDEMIC TIMES: CHANGES AND PERCEPTION

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Abstract: This article discussed the changes experience by event organizers, how the public are adapting to the changes and their perception of music events in Kuching, Sarawak post-pandemic times. This study used mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative method approach. A total of 101 respondents participated in this study through survey. According to the findings, with a total mean of 4.41, hybrid music events should be conducted in post-pandemic to accommodate both onsite and offline audiences. From the event organizers perspective, 2 informants involved stated that there will be an improvement in music events such as increasing number of audiences, bigger venue, and better service & activities.

Keywords: Physical music event, virtual music event, hybrid music event, Kuching, Sarawak, event organizers, post-pandemic time

1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional or physical events sector has a tremendous economic, social, and psychological impact on society. Attending large gatherings is also linked to happy feelings and can help with mental health and well-being. To prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, live event venues throughout the world were compelled to close (Drury et al., 2021). Hence, this chapter identify the changes and perceptions of music events in Kuching, Sarawak post pandemic times.

Covid-19 has deeply impacted the event and tourism industry especially in Kuching, Sarawak. Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), which has been declared as a pandemic of the 20th century, events are constantly facing significant turmoil in the form of cancellations or postponements (Mohanty et al., 2020). According to Getz (2008), events are important motivators in the tourism industry as they play an important part in a destination's marketing and growth. Every year, a great number of people attend events that help promote the destination, raise cultural awareness, provide job possibilities, and promote economic progress (Lee, Lee, & Yoon, 2013; Lee, Mjelde, & Kwon, 2017; Ali Amaran & Lau, 2018).

Music events that were affected during the pandemic are the Rainforest World Music Festival, What About Kuching, Borneo Jazz Festival, and more. However, this year the Rainforest World Music Festival was done virtually, with pre-recorded sessions with indigenous talent that was livestreamed on RWMF's official site, Shopee Live and TVS from 6pm to 7.30pm from 18th-20th June 2021. Since its launch on June 7, more than 12,400 users have registered on the RWMF site (Jong, 2021). Live music concerts, in particular, frequently take on ritualistic qualities, producing a sonic relationship that assists in the reciprocation of feelings amongst individuals (Bensimon, 2012).

Therefore, it is not uncommon for individuals to resort to music in times of personal or societal crises such as a global pandemic owing to its unifying qualities (Bodner and Gilboa 2009). When venues closed, there was no choice but to turn to Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube's free and accessible live-streaming platforms. As a result, the character of the live experience has altered. This raises the question of how far livestreamed performances might develop feelings of unity and resilience in the absence of physical gatherings (Vandenberg et al., 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Music events and festivals could not be held in a traditional way as during pre-pandemic times and now events are evolving to virtual and hybrid events to expand the audience's experience. Hybrid events are the first step towards a new type of event tourism that combines live marketing with a mobile application, social media and location-based services that could help the event tourism sector become more flexible and adapt to future changes (Sarpal & Kandiah, 2021). It gives an advantage for the audiences the choice to attend the event physically, watch at home or wherever they are through their smartphone. This gives a new experience as it is not necessary for them to attend the physical event.

The experience of attending a virtual event is not the same as attending a physical event as audiences get to experience more and feel the excitement in a physical event. Traditional event management is still crucial and serves as the foundation for every event, however, new approaches may be integrated into traditional event management, transforming event management into a mix of old and new features. Live streaming, webinars, and web coaching are all new features. Besides, there are several checklists and concepts accessible to event organizers on what should be considered while planning a physical event as it needs fundamental features such as transportation, accommodation, theme, entertainment, food, place, and they are restricted by physical constraints (Hoods & Pakarinen, 2018).

According to Hoods & Pakarinen (2018), the number of guests is not limited and the event itself is not bound by any physical factors, virtual reality can reduce risks, lower costs, and improve profits. The hybrid event technologies that are now available have one thing in common: they are generally designed for one-way communication. For example, live streaming may be utilised as an add-on to an event or to enhance the value of the physical event. The term "live streaming" refers to a way of broadcasting media in real-time. The media could be captured as a media file and re-streamed in several forms, allowing different mobile audiences to get the streaming and remotely follow the event.

The hybrid event concept is still important and will be until the virtual world becomes more accessible to consumers and integrated into everyday life (Hamzah et. al., 2021). The hybrid event model will be a common method of developing events until virtual interaction becomes efficient enough. Furthermore, Wu et al., (2021) mentioned, level of participation, diversity, and tolerance are all achievable with virtual platforms. However, these online communication channels have the benefit of being free, long-term, and available for as long as participants require them.

Despite the easy access towards virtual & hybrid events, there are few challenges that audiences would encounter such as high-speed internet requirements, fewer peer-to-peer interactions, the need to spend long periods in front of a computer, resulting in “screen fatigue,” work and home responsibilities, and a lack of social interactions that would otherwise be possible in a face-to-face setting (Wu et al., 2021). There aren't a lot of possibilities for engagement. Since they are not visible to the speaker, it is more difficult to keep their attention. It is simpler to experience the emotions of onsite attendees since they are present, but it is more difficult to keep distant guests motivated (Hoods & Pakarinen, 2018).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the research objectives, this study used a mixed method, including both quantitative and qualitative methods such as survey questionnaires and interview questions. Both methods are used to determine the public's perceptions of music events and festivals that are held and postponed, as well as the plans of our events from event organisers. The overall number of questionnaire respondents which represent the public perception is 101 respondents, with two event organisers participating as interview informants. SPSS Version 22 was used to analyse the data, which included descriptive statistics such as mean. This is because this software is generally significant for quantitative data analysis which normally involved in more data set (Ali Amaran, et. al., 2022).

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

There are a total of 101 respondents who participated in this study, and most of the respondents were female, with a total of 61 (60.4%) and 40 (39.6%) male. Most respondents are less than 29 years old (91%), with most of them being 23 years old (25.7%). Next with the percentage of (5%) are more than 40 years old and (4%) with the age between 30 to 39 years old. Most Sarawakian' answers consist of (92%) 93 respondents, followed by Sabah (5%), Johor (2%) and Selangor (1%). For education, 52 (51.5%) respondents have their bachelor's degree or have the degree qualification. The second most respondents are in their diploma with 22 (21.8%) followed by 12 (11.9%) respondents with STPM/Matriculation and 13 (12.9%) respondents with SPM. Of others, with (2%) are professional and university dropouts. Hence, most of the respondents are students (55%) employed at the percentage of (35%) and unemployed at the percentage of (9%) and other, which is business owner consists of (1%). Out of all 101 respondents, 39 respondents have attended Sarawak music events whereas 62 respondents answered “No” to never attending any music events in Sarawak. However, the most popular event

respondents attended is the Rainforest World Music Festival followed by What About Kuching and other Sarawak music events and festivals. The reliability and validity of section B are 0.73, and the total questions are 0.78, according to the Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 1: Events attended by respondents

No.	Name of Events	Number of people
1.	Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF)	23
2.	What About Kuching (WAK)	10
3.	Borneo Jazz Festival	5
4.	Kuching Waterfront Jazz Festival (KWJF)	5
5.	Miri Country Music Fest	2
6.	Sarawak Cultural Village	2
7.	Sarawak International Festival Music and Arts (SIFMA)	1
8.	The Sarawak Harvest & Folklore Festival 2021	1
9.	Borneo Music Festival	1
10.	Hora Horey Gig	1
11.	Miri Afrolatin Fiesta	1
12.	Waterfront Amphitheatre	1
13.	Sarawak Highlands Folk Music & Dance Festival	1

Table 2: Examine both online and offline experience to understand how to provide a better service of events

Factors	Mean
B7. Hybrid events should be done to satisfy the audiences' wants and needs from home as well.	4.41
B6. Post-pandemic live event must be convenient to attend despite the standard operating procedures applied.	4.31
B4. Virtual event should be shown on television as well instead on live streaming platforms only.	4.30
B5. Audiences' online experiences are influenced by engagement and effective communication, as well as their behavioral intentions toward the event.	4.28
B3. If no, would you attend a virtual music event in the future?	3.78
B2. If yes, was your experience watching a virtual music event satisfying?	3.56
B1. Did you attend any Sarawak music events [live or virtual] in 2021?	1.74

Table 2 indicates the mean that most people agree that hybrid events should be done to satisfy the wants and needs from home as well. Hybrid events could share the experiences of audiences at home or those who could not attend physically. Since we are in the new norm, it is highly recommended for event organizers to organise their events via hybrid.

As for qualitative method, event organizers are more focused on the offline experience compared to the online experience as there are no virtual music events on plan. However, if virtual or hybrid music event is paid attention to, it could create a better experience for both offline and online audiences. That way this could keep the music events in Sarawak to be lively again.

5. DISCUSSION

The first objective is to examine both online and offline experiences to understand how to provide a better service of events. Through the questionnaire and interview, there is a difference between both responses from the public and event organizers regarding the music events in Kuching, Sarawak. Being in the new norm of music events, hybrid music events should be organised to ensure offsite audiences could participate in the event as well. The public is expecting an upgrade from the music events after the 2 years of postponement in 2020 and 2021.

Everyone is looking forward to attending music events both physical, virtual or both (hybrid). With the implementation of hybrid music events, audiences could make their choices whether to attend physically or watch remotely. While traditional event management is still crucial and serves as the foundation for every event, there are new approaches that may be integrated into traditional event management, transforming event management into a mix of old and new aspects such as live streaming (Hoods & Pakarinen, 2018).

According to Meola (2016), live streaming is a way through which media is transmitted in real-time. The video is captured as a media file and re-streamed in various forms, allowing different mobile audiences to get the streaming and virtually follow the event. It has become a more often utilised means for companies to reach the people - a continually expanding method to reach more audiences all over the world, as well as a significant component in the development of international events. Live streaming, for example, can be utilised as an add-on to the event and to add value to the actual event itself.

There are several platforms and methods for streaming events, and it is a cost-effective option to boost the number of participants who are unable to participate in person. Streaming platforms include Facebook Live, YouTube Live, and others (Hoods & Pakarinen, 2018). Hence, it is easier for audiences to enjoy and experience music events from home without the need to attend the event. As Hoods & Pakarinen, 2018 mentioned, the hybrid model of events is still important and will remain till the virtual world becomes more accessible to the public and becomes a part of daily life. Until virtual interaction becomes sufficiently smooth, the hybrid event model will be a popular approach to creating events.

Next, based on the findings from both event organizers through an interview, it can be concluded that music events are most likely to be more active this year. This is due to the loosened restrictions by the government since it is safe to organise big events this year. Plus, by now everyone is mostly fully vaccinated and has received their second booster. Furthermore, from May 1, the government declared that wearing face masks outside and registering trips to public places via MySejahtera check-ins will no longer be mandatory. The Ministry of Health announced a change to the face mask mandate, making masking optional but strongly encouraged in outdoor situations (Zainuddin, 2022).

Hence, there will be more participation from the public to attend music events, changes in the venue and better services in the new norm of music events. Based on the event organizers' responses, they are prepared to organize music events for Kuching audiences to enjoy once again. They have received plenty of suggestions and recommendations from the public pre-pandemic times to improve their events and they are most likely to execute them this year. However, as we move towards the new event norm, paying attention to virtual or hybrid music events may result in a better experience for both offline and online listeners. Physical music events are taking place, and event organisers are making full use of live streaming technologies to host hybrid music events. In this manner, Sarawak's music events might be revitalised.

6. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, this summarises the whole study compiled by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher's discoveries and findings are linked to the concepts used in this study. In Kuching, Sarawak, the researcher did a study on post-pandemic changes and views of music events. The researcher may go into further detail on the implementation of hybrid events during the discussion because there are several platforms and techniques for streaming events, and it is a cost-effective way to expand the number of participants. Furthermore, event organisers are concentrating on ways to improve this year's music event for audiences in Kuching, Sarawak. The influence of attending a physical music event remains strong since it gives a greater experience than a virtual music event. Since we were unable to fathom the state of music event this year, everyone needs to stay vigilant towards their surroundings. Lastly, participants could still attend music events despite the challenges of music events in post-pandemic times.

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