
**STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE MICE INDUSTRY IN THE NUSANTARA
CAPITAL BUFFER CITY: STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF FACILITY QUALITY,
SATISFACTION, AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE ERA OF FISCAL
AUSTERITY**

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ABSTRACT

The Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) industry in Indonesia is currently at a critical crossroads triggered by two waves of macro-economic disruption: the relocation of the national capital to Nusantara (IKN) in East Kalimantan and the implementation of strict government budget efficiency policies (fiscal austerity). This research report presents an in-depth empirical analysis regarding the determinants of customer loyalty in Samarinda, the main buffer city of IKN, amidst a structural market shift from government dominance toward a competitive corporate sector. Adopting the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework and Resource Dependence Theory, this study tests a structural model placing Perceived MICE Facility Quality (X1) as the physical stimulus influencing Customer Satisfaction (M) and Customer Loyalty (Y). Using primary data from 220 respondents consisting of corporate clients, government officials, and professional event organizers, the analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method. The research results reveal significant findings: (1) MICE Facility Quality has a very strong direct influence on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that in the context of buffer city infrastructure development, the tangibles aspect becomes a key performance indicator. (2) Facility Quality also directly influences Customer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), indicating the existence of functionality-based loyalty. (3) Customer Satisfaction is proven to partially mediate the relationship between facilities and loyalty with a significant effect ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$). These findings provide crucial managerial implications for the hotel industry in Samarinda: in the post-capital relocation era, investment in technological modernization and venue ergonomics is no longer just added value, but a fundamental prerequisite for survival and winning over the increasingly critical private market.

Keywords: MICE Industry, Facility Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Nusantara Capital City (IKN), PLS-SEM, Buffer City, Fiscal Austerity.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Changing Global and National MICE Industry Landscape

The global tourism and hospitality industry, particularly the Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) sector, is undergoing a fundamental transformation. No longer just providers of static meeting spaces, this industry has evolved into a complex experiential ecosystem where the integration of technology, psychosocial comfort, and physical environmental aesthetics play a

central role in determining the success of an event. At the global level, this shift is driven by post-pandemic demands for hybrid meetings and higher health and safety standards. However, in Indonesia, this dynamic is complicated by two very specific and monumentally scaled domestic factors: the relocation of the center of government and fiscal policy reform.

Indonesia is in the process of moving its capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan, a strategic initiative known as the development of the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN). This decision is not merely an administrative transfer, but a giant socio-economic engineering project that permanently alters land use, demographics, and economic structures in the region. East Kalimantan Province, especially buffer cities like Balikpapan and Samarinda, has suddenly been pushed to the forefront of national urbanization. Samarinda, as the provincial capital adjacent to IKN, faces dual pressures: it must support the logistics of state apparatus migration while simultaneously transforming itself into an independent and competitive business destination.

1.2 The Phenomenon of Fiscal Austerity and Market Shock

Amidst the euphoria of IKN development, the hospitality industry in Samarinda faces a challenging policy paradox. Historically, hotels in Samarinda have been heavily dependent on the "Government Market," where National/Regional Budget (APBN/APBD) spending accounts for 50% to 70% of total hotel revenue, primarily from official meetings and technical guidance activities.¹ This dependency created extreme structural vulnerability.

This vulnerability was starkly exposed when the central government implemented strict budget efficiency policies. Starting in the era of President Joko Widodo through Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 7/2014 which prohibited meeting activities in hotels for Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD), this policy continued and was tightened during the transition to the new government. The administration of President Prabowo Subianto reaffirmed the commitment to fiscal efficiency by limiting official travel and banning meeting packages in hotels for agencies that possess internal facilities.

The impact of this policy is systemic. Data shows that these restrictions caused a drastic decline in occupancy rates and ballroom utilization across Indonesia, with Samarinda being among the most severely affected due to its undiversified market profile. This phenomenon created an "Institutional Shock" forcing hotel management to execute a radical strategic pivot: shifting from serving a *captive* government bureaucracy to a competitive corporate and private market.

1.3 The Urgency of Facility Quality in Capturing the Private Market

In the effort to win the non-government market (corporations, professional associations, and social events), the rules of the game have changed completely. If the government market is often driven by regulatory compliance and lobbying relationships, the private market is driven by perceived value and experience quality. Corporate clients, such as mining, oil, and gas companies operating in East Kalimantan, demand facility standards equivalent to Jakarta or Singapore.

Therefore, the variable MICE Facility Quality (X1) becomes the main spotlight. In the context of a developing city like Samarinda, where public infrastructure may still be in the upgrade phase, a hotel's ability to provide an infrastructure "oasis"—high-speed internet, sophisticated audio-visual systems, and ergonomic comfort—becomes a critical differentiating factor. This study argues that physical facilities (*tangibles*) are not merely supporting factors, but the primary *drivers* of satisfaction and loyalty in the IKN era.

1.4 Problem Formulation

Although the urgency of this transformation is clear, there is a significant knowledge gap in the hospitality management literature within the context of emerging cities acting as buffers for a new capital. Previous research often combines facility quality and service quality into one general variable, Service Quality (SERVQUAL), thereby obscuring the specific impact of physical infrastructure.⁸ Furthermore, few studies have empirically tested how the interaction between physical facilities and customer satisfaction shapes loyalty amidst austerity policy pressures that force sudden market segment changes.

Based on this background, the problem formulation in this study is:

1. Does perceived MICE facility quality directly influence customer satisfaction in Samarinda?
2. Is perceived MICE facility quality capable of building customer loyalty directly without passing through satisfaction?
3. What is the mediating role of customer satisfaction in translating facility quality into long-term loyalty commitment?

1.5 Research Objectives

This study aims to construct a comprehensive structural model to explain the determinants of MICE customer loyalty in Samarinda. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. **Analyze the Impact of Facilities on Satisfaction:** Measure how much the physical aspects of the *venue* (technology, cleanliness, layout) contribute to the customer's cognitive and affective evaluation.
2. **Test the Dual Loyalty Pathway:** Prove whether loyalty is formed through a functional pathway (facilities → loyalty) or an emotional pathway (facilities → satisfaction → loyalty), or both.
3. **Provide Strategic Guidance:** Provide data-driven recommendations for hotel managers and policymakers in the IKN buffer zone to increase regional tourism industry competitiveness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

2.1.1 Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Framework

This research is based on the *Stimulus-Organism-Response* (S-O-R) paradigm introduced by Mehrabian and Russell. In the context of the MICE service industry, the **Stimulus (S)** is represented by the hotel's physical environment or *servicescape*, namely MICE Facility Quality (X1). This stimulus triggers an internal response within the consumer, the **Organism (O)**, manifested in the form of emotional and cognitive evaluation or Customer Satisfaction (M). This internal process then produces a behavioral **Response (R)**, namely Customer Loyalty (Y), characterized by revisit intention and positive recommendations. This model is highly relevant for explaining how static physical elements can influence dynamic human behavior.

2.1.2 Institutional Theory and Resource Dependence

Beyond consumer psychology, this research is also framed by Institutional Theory. This theory explains how organizations (hotels) must adapt to external environmental pressures, such as government regulations (meeting bans). The hotel's dependence on external resources

(government budget) is explained by Resource Dependence Theory. When this primary resource is restricted, hotels are forced to seek alternative resources (private market) by improving their internal capabilities, primarily facility quality, to attract this new customer base.

2.2 Perceived MICE Facility Quality (Variable X1)

2.2.1 Definition and Dimensions

MICE Facility Quality is defined as the customer's perception of the reliability, comfort, and completeness of the physical infrastructure provided to support meeting activities. Unlike ordinary accommodation, MICE facilities possess complex technical specifications. Its main dimensions include:

- **Technological Infrastructure:** Reliability of audio systems, clarity of projectors, stability of Wi-Fi connections, and availability of power outlets. Failure in this aspect is fatal for a business event.
- **Space Comfort and Ergonomics:** Includes flexible *layout*, chair quality for long-duration meetings, lighting, and room temperature. Studies show that physical discomfort can drastically lower meeting participant concentration.
- **Aesthetics and Cleanliness:** Toilet cleanliness, lobby beauty, and building maintenance reflecting the professional image of the event organizer.

It is important to note that in the context of this research, "MICE" strictly refers to the meetings industry (*Meeting, Incentive, Convention, Exhibition*), and is unrelated to laboratory animal studies (mice) that often appear in scientific literature searches with similar keywords.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction (Variable M)

Customer Satisfaction is a consumer fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. In this model, satisfaction acts as a mediator (M). MICE customers compare actual facility performance with their expectations. Given Samarinda's status as an IKN buffer city, customer expectations tend to rise in line with the "modern city" narrative built by the government, making satisfaction standards harder to achieve.

2.4 Customer Loyalty (Variable Y)

Customer Loyalty in the B2B (Business-to-Business) MICE context is not only emotional but also transactional and calculated. Loyalty is defined as a deep commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior. Indicators of loyalty include:

- **Retention:** Intention to reuse the *venue* for future events.
- **Advocacy:** Willingness to recommend the hotel to colleagues or business partners (*Word of Mouth*).
- **Immunity:** Resistance to lower price offers from competitors.

2.5 Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review above, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- **H1:** Perceived MICE Facility Quality has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. Superior facilities meet customer functional and hedonic needs, creating

positive confirmation of their expectations.

- **H2:** Perceived MICE Facility Quality has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty. Business customers tend to be risk-averse; proven reliable facilities create "functional dependence" that directly encourages repurchase.
- **H3:** Customer Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty. Positive post-consumption evaluation strengthens emotional bonds and future behavioral intentions.
- **H4:** Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Perceived MICE Facility Quality and Customer Loyalty. Good facilities drive loyalty not only because of their function but also because of the feeling of pleasure and satisfaction they generate.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal-explanatory design. This method was chosen to test the hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships between variables and measure the magnitude of their influence.¹ The research is *cross-sectional*, meaning data collection was conducted at a single point in time (2024-2025) while the IKN policy transition and fiscal austerity were intensively ongoing.

3.2 Population and Sample

3.2.1 Population

The research population is users of MICE facility services in star-rated hotels in Samarinda City. This population is heterogeneous, covering representatives of private companies (mining, services, trade sectors), government agency employees (who still hold limited or private events), academics, and professional *Event Organizers*.

3.2.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling technique used was *Purposive Sampling*, with the criteria that respondents must have organized or attended a MICE event at a hotel in Samarinda within the last 6 months. The sample size determination did not use the conventional "10-times rule" as it is often considered less accurate. Instead, this study adopted the *Inverse Square Root Method* recommended by Kock & Hadaya (2018) for PLS-SEM analysis.¹ This method guarantees a statistical power of 80% at a significance level of 0.05. Based on this calculation, the ideal minimum sample size is 160. This study successfully collected data from **220 respondents**, far exceeding the minimum limit to ensure result validity.

3.3 Research Instrument and Operational Definitions

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree/Dissatisfied to 5 = Strongly Agree/Satisfied). Variable indicators were adapted from previous literature:

- **Perceived MICE Facility Quality (X1):**
 - X1.1: Cleanliness and comfort of the event space.
 - X1.2: Quality and completeness of supporting technology (Sound system, projector, Wi-Fi).

- X1.3: *Layout and room flexibility.*
- *(Note: Indicators X1.4 (Food) and X1.5 (Other supporting facilities) were dropped in the validity test due to low loading factors, indicating respondent focus on core meeting infrastructure).*
- **Customer Satisfaction (M):**
 - M1: Conformity of facilities with expectations.
 - M2: Overall feeling of satisfaction.
 - M3: Appropriateness of the decision to choose the *venue*.
- **Customer Loyalty (Y):**
 - Y1: Plan for future reuse.
 - Y2: Willingness to recommend to others.
 - Y3: Top priority compared to competitors.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was performed using the *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) method with the help of WarpPLS 8.0 software. The selection of PLS-SEM was based on its ability to handle complex structural models with moderate sample sizes, and it does not require strict data normality assumptions (non-parametric). The analysis was conducted in two stages: evaluation of the *Outer Model* (validity and reliability) and evaluation of the *Inner Model* (hypothesis testing and model predictive power).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile

Demographic analysis of 220 respondents provides a clear picture of the MICE market shift in Samarinda.¹ The majority of respondents are in the young productive age range of 25-35 years (69.1%), followed by the 36-45 years age group (21.8%). The dominance of the millennial and Gen Z groups indicates that current MICE facility users are a tech-savvy generation possessing high standards for aesthetics and functionality.

In terms of occupation, the **Private sector (51.8%)** dominates the respondent composition, surpassing the **Civil Servant/Government sector (30.9%)**. This data empirically confirms the premise that the policy banning hotel meetings for the government has significantly altered the market structure. Hotels in Samarinda now serve corporate needs more than bureaucracy. The **Event Organizer (6.4%)** and **Wedding Organizer (3.6%)** groups, although small, represent key influencer segments whose purchasing decisions significantly affect hotel business volume.

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The first step in PLS-SEM analysis is ensuring the integrity of the measurement instrument. The indicator refinement process was carried out by removing items with loading factor values below 0.70.¹ The table below summarizes the final instrument quality test results:

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Status	Composite Reliability	AVE
MICE Facilities (X1)	X1.1 (Space)	0.939	Valid	0.960	0.889

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Status	Composite Reliability	AVE
	X1.2 (Technology)	0.964	Valid		
	X1.3 (Layout)	0.926	Valid		
Satisfaction (M)	M1 (Expectations)	0.979	Valid	0.967	0.907
	M2 (Feeling)	0.897	Valid		
	M3 (Decision)	0.979	Valid		
Loyalty (Y)	Y1 (Intention to Return)	1.000	Valid	1.000	1.000
	Y2 (Recommendation)	1.000	Valid		
	Y3 (Priority)	1.000	Valid		

Source: WarpPLS 8.0 Output (Processed Data, 2025) 1

The results show exceptionally high convergent validity, with all loading factors above 0.89. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables are well above the 0.50 limit, meaning the indicator variance is explained more by its construct than by error. Composite reliability is also very high (> 0.90), indicating excellent internal consistency. Discriminant validity is also met, where the square root of the AVE for each variable is greater than its correlation with other variables.

4.3 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

After measurements were confirmed valid, evaluation shifted to the structural model to test relationships between variables. Model quality was assessed using several fit indices:

- **Tenenhous Goodness of Fit (GoF):** The model GoF value is **0.747**. Given the reference value for the "Large" category is 0.36, this result shows that the empirical model has a very strong fit with the field data.
- **Predictive Power (R^2):**
 - The R^2 value for **Customer Satisfaction (M)** is **0.44**. This means 44% of the variation in customer satisfaction can be explained by facility quality (and service).
 - The R^2 value for **Customer Loyalty (Y)** is **0.76**. This is a very substantial finding. The model is able to explain 76% of the reasons why customers become loyal. This high figure underscores that facility and satisfaction factors are absolute determinants in the Samarinda MICE industry.
- **Average Path Coefficient (APC):** 0.393 ($P < 0.001$), indicating that on average, the relationship paths in the model have a strong and significant influence.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing and In-Depth Discussion

Below are the hypothesis testing results based on path coefficients (β) and significance values (P-value):

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Coefficient (β)	P-Value	Decision
H1	Facilities (X1) $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction (M)	0.66	< 0.001	Accepted
H2	Facilities (X1) $\rightarrow$ Loyalty (Y)	0.42	< 0.001	Accepted
H3	Satisfaction (M) $\rightarrow$ Loyalty (Y)	0.57	< 0.001	Accepted
H4	Facilities (X1) $\rightarrow$ M $\rightarrow$ Y	Significant	< 0.001	Accepted

4.4.1 Dominance of Facilities in Shaping Satisfaction (H1)

The analysis results show that Facility Quality has a very strong positive influence on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.66$). This is the strongest path coefficient in the model. This finding provides deep insight into customer psychology in a developing city. Amidst the massive IKN development, there is an infrastructure gap between modern venues and old ones. Customers view technological reliability (internet, audio) and space comfort not just as complementary facilities, but as key indicators of professionalism. When a hotel in Samarinda is able to provide international standard facilities that are "trouble-free," it immediately creates high satisfaction because it meets the high expectations of corporate clients.

4.4.2 Functional Loyalty: Direct Role of Facilities (H2)

An interesting finding is the significant direct influence of Facilities on Loyalty ($\beta = 0.42$). This indicates the existence of "Structural Loyalty" or risk-based loyalty. Event organizers (EO) and company managers tend to be reluctant to take the risk of moving to another hotel whose facility quality is untested, even if the price might be cheaper. In the B2B MICE market, technical failures (such as power outages or slow internet during video conferences) are fatal reputational risks. Therefore, reliable facilities lock customers in (lock-in effect) directly, regardless of whether they feel emotionally "satisfied" or not.

4.4.3 Mediation Role of Satisfaction (H3 & H4)

Satisfaction proves to be a strong mediator ($\beta = 0.57$ for the path to Loyalty). This confirms that the most durable loyalty is formed through a Dual Pathway: the functional pathway (facilities $\rightarrow$ loyalty) and the affective pathway (facilities $\rightarrow$ satisfaction $\rightarrow$ loyalty). Customers whose facility needs are met AND who feel happy with the experience will become strong brand advocates.

4.4.4 Service Anomaly Phenomenon (Additional Insight)

Although the main focus of this report is variables X1, M, and Y, complete data from model 1 reveals a surprising fact: the Service Quality variable (X2) has a negative influence on Satisfaction ($\beta = -0.17$). This is a phenomenon of Negative Disconfirmation. It is possible that as the physical quality of hotels in Samarinda improves (to welcome IKN), the quality of human resources (HR) has not been able to keep up with that speed. Critical private sector respondents may compare the luxury of physical facilities with staff service perceived as less responsive or too bureaucratic (a legacy of the culture of serving the government market). The gap between "five-star" facilities and "three-star" service is precisely what lowers satisfaction. However, uniquely, service remains a positive influence on loyalty ($\beta = 0.53$ in the full model), indicating that customers remain loyal out of necessity, despite often complaining about service aspects.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research successfully proves empirically that amidst the structural transformation of Samarinda as an IKN buffer city and fiscal austerity policy pressures, MICE Facility Quality (X1) emerges as the most crucial determinant for hospitality business sustainability. Physical facilities not only serve as the main driver of Customer Satisfaction (M) with a dominant impact ($\beta = 0.66$) but are also capable of creating Customer Loyalty (Y) directly ($\beta = 0.42$) through risk mitigation mechanisms and functional reliability. The research model has very high predictive power, explaining 76% of customer loyalty variance, underscoring that an asset-heavy strategy is the key to winning in the current Samarinda MICE market.

5.2 Managerial and Policy Implications

- **Technology Investment Priority (CapEx):** Hotel management must prioritize *Capital Expenditure* for MICE technology rejuvenation. *High bandwidth Wi-Fi*, high-resolution videotron/LED screens, and clear sound systems are investments providing the highest *return on investment* (ROI) in the form of satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Specification-Based Marketing Strategy:** In targeting the private market and EOs, marketing materials must highlight the *venue's* technical specifications (electrical capacity, internet speed, chair ergonomics) instead of just hospitality jargon, as data shows clients care more about infrastructure reliability.
- **Service Culture Reform:** To address the anomaly of the negative influence of service on satisfaction, hotels need to conduct a work culture revolution. Intensive training regarding *corporate service urgency* is needed to change staff mentality from a bureaucratic service style (slow, procedural) to a corporate service style (fast, solution-oriented).

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This research is limited to a single point in time (cross-sectional) during the early IKN transition phase. Over time, when all hotels have updated their facilities, the differentiating factor may shift back to the service aspect (service excellence). Future research is advised to use a longitudinal approach to track the evolution of these preferences, as well as expand the model by including Price Fairness and Brand Image variables to obtain a more holistic picture.

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