Perceptions of Travel Planning for Musicians: A Malaysian Perspective
Raidah Asma Abd Rahim1 and Dazmin Daud2

Abstract
The objective of this paper is to study the perceptions of musicians who are working in an orchestra company concerning the efficiency in travel planning when they are travelling abroad. The study attempted to examine how these musicians viewed visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services in terms of its importance towards travel planning. Using a convenience sampling, a survey was carried out among 31 employees who are working as musicians in an orchestra company. It was found that respondents viewed visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services as important in travel planning. The paper provides an insight for logistics managers to aware on visa arrangement, ground transportation and air cargo services as factors that may need to be considered when planning a travel for musicians and their instruments particularly for overseas trips. Implications and limitations from this study are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION
The modern orchestra comes from Ancient Egypt (Raynor, 1978). It is believed that the first orchestras were made up of small group of musicians in order to serve at events such as festivals, holidays or funerals (Spitzer & Zaslaw, 2004). An orchestra is a large instrumental ensemble that contains section of string, brass, woodwind and percussion instruments (Spitzer & Zaslaw, 2004). A smaller-sized orchestra for this time period (of about fifty musicians or fewer) is called chamber orchestra. A full-size orchestra (about 100 musicians) may sometimes be called a “symphony orchestra” or “philharmonic orchestra”, these modifiers do not necessarily indicate any strict difference in either the instrumental constitution or role of the orchestra but can be useful distinguish different ensemble based in the same city (for instance, the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra).

In Malaysia, there are orchestra companies such as the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), the Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) Jazz Orchestra, the Penang State Symphony Orchestra (PESOC), the Perak Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) and the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre Orchestra (KLPAC Orchestra). Rather than that, to assist in the development and greater appreciation of orchestral music among Malaysian youth a few an established youth orchestra company has been set up in Malaysia. Uniquely, in orchestra industry, touring has become an important element in raising the company’s international profile. This touring activity is valued as important for exposing international audience to Malaysian orchestral work and culture. The orchestra tour is strongly supported by the company’s vast industry relationships and experience. In the orchestra perspective, travelling is simply part of the job. Every year the musicians must travel for concert tour to experience other concert hall and change the culture. Apart of that, it shows their professionalism when performed with other country.

Because of touring is a core activity, the concert tour requires proper logistics planning. For instance, a precise timetable is drawn up and must be strictly adhered to. This includes the administrative task and also the arrangement of transportation. Therefore, the logistics function in an orchestral company plays a vital role in order to make sure that the concert tour is successfully organized.

Logistically, when an orchestral company decides to arrange an international concert tour, major arrangements will involve activities such as visa preparation, air cargo and ground transportation services. Visa is related to the movement of people from the country to other country. It also involved a very rigid procedures depending to the country that company have chosen. The most crucial part before travelling, the musicians and support team need to have visa permit. Visa will authorize them to enter other country for performance. Yet, the arrangement to get the visa can be categories as tedious. It

1 Professional Qualifying Examination (Logistics) Program, UniKL Malaysian Institute of Aviation Technology, Malaysia
2 Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, E-Mail: daazmin@yahoo.com

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involves collection of individual passport, photos, and letter invitation. All the musicians and support team must make sure that the visa is valid.

For ground transportation services and air cargo services they involve both, people and also sensitive musical equipments. Therefore, special requirements are needed to avoid any damages occurred. Normally every touring activities, the service provider must supply a good condition of 24ft Reefer Truck, 24ft Box Truck with tailgate, and 8 ton Box Truck without tailgate, and forklift (for example see Lawson & Hossain, 1989). The pallets and tools including the provision of shock indicator on palletizing or packaging are needed to detect and monitor shock or vibration during journey or handling. The service provider also needs to ensure a minimum loading and unloading procedure and time frame to avoid from maximum heat exposure.

Besides that, transportation for the musicians and support team should be accounted too. This will include the total number of people to be transported from airport to hotel, hotel to hall, hall to hotel, and hotel to airport. In the case of air cargo service, it requires lower decks pallets to ship the musical equipments. The charges of the services are accounted in weight, i.e. kilogram where 1 pallet equals to 1,500 kilograms.

**Statement of Problem**

Although affirmative action has been portrayed as a way from increasing the number of efficiency in travel planning, little literature focus on the orchestra industry especially in the Malaysia scenario (see Heesch, 2003; Ng & Whalley, 2008; Ohashi, Kim, Oum & Yu, 2005). Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap. This helps to enhance our understanding about the key factors that contribute to the relative success or failure of the efficiency in travel planning for a Malaysian orchestra company. The research question is therefore:

What are the characteristics of visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services on efficiency in travel planning?

In line with the problem statement, this study has two specific objectives:

1. To characterize the perceptions of musicians who are working in an orchestra company toward efficiency in travel planning.
2. To explore the perceptions of visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services on efficiency in travel planning.

The findings of the research would clarify on the theoretical contribution, thus enriching the existing literature in orchestra logistics planning particularly in the Malaysian perspective. This study will also describe the nature of visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services factors on the efficiency in travel planning during a concert tour for Malaysian orchestra company. In addition to that, the result of this study will provide the Malaysian orchestra company with a better view of important factors need to consider when planning a travel.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Visa Arrangement**

A visa gives non-citizens clearance to enter a country and to remain there within specified constraints, such as a time frame for entry, a limit on the time spent in the country, and a prohibition against employment. Torpey (2000) pointed out that there are countries which exert control over those who may exit their territory. He further added that in some countries it is difficult for certain group of people to gain a passport to travel abroad; while other severely restrict the movement of people within their territory.

Flynn (2000) has discussed the usage of visa in relation to international business perspective. He stressed that some countries, in order to promote international business, have exempted the usage of visa base on bilateral relations. For example, Malaysian does not need to obtain a visa in advance of a short holiday visit to New Zealand. Visitors with Malaysian passport require a valid passport with 3 months beyond the date of leaving New Zealand. It is because New Zealand has strong official business and individual links with Malaysia, which is an influential member of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).
There is a literature that studied the tedious process when one applies for a visa. Visa fees, delays in issuance, randomness in decisions, complexities for transit visas, collateral costs, medical requirements, and tool for taxation are the attributes to tedious process for a visa (Ng & Whalley, 2008). For example, Ng and Whalley pointed out that the process of obtaining visa involves a lot of cost. These include application costs (application fees, interviews, form completion, photo requirement), processing cost (administrative cost), possible delays costs, and add-on costs (reapplication costs due to rejection, airline processing).

**Air Cargo Services**

The logistics of moving air cargo is not only concern on moving passengers but also involves in packaging, preparing documentation, arranging insurance, collecting cargo from shippers, facilitating customs, clearance at origin and destination, and completing final delivery (Ohashi et al., 2005). The container loading plan plays an important role in the process of cargo loading operations. In air transport cargo services, the containers available for loading cargos are called as Unit Load Devices (ULD) (Chan & Kumar, 2006). Chan and Kumar further described the concept of ULD. The shape of ULD used for loading is irregular pentagon or hexagon because of its proper accommodation inside the aircraft. The cross section of the air craft’s body changes throughout from the end to the tail end and therefore, the size and shape of the pallets changes according to the placement of it in the aircraft. They are usually devoid of passenger amenities, and generally feature one or more large doors for loading and unloading of cargo.

In the music industry, the musical instruments are considered as sensitive product and they need a specific temperature for storage and shipment (Lee, 2009). As described by Lee, the pitch of the musical instruments indicates low when the instruments are exposed to the temperature of 30°C. However, musical instruments like woodwind and brass demonstrate a high pitch in a high temperature.

Security is a critical element in air cargo shipment (International Air Transport Association, 2011). Country such as the United States has a very strict on the air cargo movement inbound to the country thorough The Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) (The Aviation and Transportation Security Act, 2001). The Act contains general provision for cargo screening, inspection and security measures. Some potential risks associated with air cargo security include introduction of explosive and incendiary devices in cargo placed aboard aircraft, shipment of undeclared or undetected hazardous materials aboard aircraft, and cargo crime including theft and smuggling (Peterman, Elias & Frittelli, 2011).

**Ground Transportation Services**

Ground transport services have features such as automated guided vehicles (AVGs), forklifts and conveyors in order to accommodate freight cargo at a transport terminal (Hartmann, 2004). Due to the security concern, some countries like the United States has imposed the use of material safety data sheets (MSDS) for motor carrier and approval to carry sensitive materials by truck is strictly controlled by the United States Federal Law (Giermanski, 2010). The MSDS documents travel with sensitive or hazardous materials are used to handle the material, health effect, storage, disposal, and incident procedures.

For ground transportation services, the activity of material handling plays an important role in efficiency of operation (Morash & Ozment, 1994). According to Coyle, Langley, Novack and Gibson (2009), the use of pallets to handle large quantities of properly stacked cartons has been recognized as one of the most important ideas in material handling. In the case of orchestra band, it is a difficult task to ensure the musical instruments free from any damages during a ground shipment (Heesch, 2003). Heesch further describe in detail the procedures in handling musical instruments for ground transportation services.

**Travel Planning**

Jeng and Fesenmaier (2002) define travel planning as a multi-faceted decision process. It consists of choosing a destination and it groups together tourism and services (attractions, accommodations, and activities). When one decides to travel, there is a need to create an itinerary (Ambite et al., 2002). Ambite et al. added that when one has a plan, there will be many possible events that can affect the plan such as schedule changes or flight cancellations, and checking for these possible events requires time and effort.

The standard approach to planning business trip is to select the flight, reserve a hotel, and possibly a car at the destination (Sigala, 2010). Choices of which airport to fly into and out of, whether to park at airport
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or to take a taxi, and whether to rent a car at the destination are often ad hoc choices based on past experience. These choices are frequently suboptimal, but the time and effort required to make more informed choices usually outweighs the cost. A critical prerequisite for the formulation of effective travel planning must include the knowledge of using the Internet (Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1998). The increasing presence of the internet as an instrument for advertising travel destinations and travel-related services highlights its importance as a factor in travelers’ decision making processes. Ricci and Missier (2004) have emphasized that a well integrated system could produce efficiency in travelling. Other literature such as from Zue et al. (1994) has studied the importance of spoken language to book a flight for air travel planning.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
The research design methods being used in this research is the quantitative research. Besides, this research involved structured questions which has predetermined and needs respondents to be involved. In this study, the information from the musicians who are working in an orchestra company are needed in order to determine the whether the three factors discussed in the literature section influence positively the travel planning during a concert tour. Positivistic study was been chosen because it has clear specific problem and detailed information needed.

Questionnaire Design
There were two parts in the design of the questionnaire. The first part dealt with the respondent’s demographic question. The second part of the questionnaire was designed to capture the respondents’ perceptions on air cargo services, ground transportation services, efficiency of travel planning, and efficiency in travel planning. In measuring the constructs, multi-item scales were used in the questionnaire with adoption from different sources of the existing literature. The measurement for visa arrangement (five items) was adopted from Ng and Whalley (2008) and Torpey (2000); while air cargo services (five items) was derived from Peterman et al. (2011) and Ohashi et al. (2005). As for ground transportation service measurement, five items was adopted from Heesch (2003) and Morash and Ozment (1994). There are five items that measured efficiency of travel planning. These five items were adopted from Sigala (2010), Bonn et al. (1998) and Ricci and Missier (2004). All the items are measured by using a 5-point Likert scale, in which the scale is ranging from ‘extremely unimportant’ to ‘extremely important’.

Sampling
A total of 31 respondents were selected from a local orchestra company to participate in this study. A self-administered survey method was used to collect the data. Questionnaires were distributed based on the convenience sampling method at their working premises. Questionnaires were given to them with a request to fill in on-the-spot. All 31 respondents responded to the invitation.

Data Analysis
Judging from the relatively small sample size and subjectivity of the rating by respondents, the study requires the use of simple statistical analysis techniques. Related findings should be considered tentative and should be further confirmed by future research with a larger sample size. Descriptive data analysis and frequency were used to explore the respondents’ perceptions on air cargo services, ground transportation services, efficiency of travel planning, and efficiency in travel planning.

RESULTS
Characteristics of the Respondents
Based on the data collected, the demographical profile of respondents was constructed (Table 1). In term of age, the largest proportion of respondents fell into the “Below 35 years” age group. They accounted for 48.4 percent. This was followed by the “36 - 45 years” age group (38.7 percent) and “Above 45 years” age group (12.9 percent).

A large portion of the respondents had a working experience for 1 year and above but less than 16 years (80.7 percent). 3 respondents had less than 1 year of working experience (9.7 percent) while the same number showed those who had more than 16 years of working experience.
In terms of education, majority of respondents held a degree (45.2 percent). This was followed by diploma (35.5 percent), masters (12.9 percent), and high school (6.5 percent).

### Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents (n= 31)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 5 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; more than 16 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 35 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 45 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 45 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Visa Arrangement Factor**

The responses to the 5 items on visa arrangement show that the respondents viewed visa arrangement as “important” (4 items) and “uncertain” (1 item). The mean and standard deviation (SD) scores for the respondents’ perceived on visa arrangement are summarized in Table 2.

In Table 2, the overall mean scores for visa arrangement range from 4.10 to 3.16. The high mean scores indicate that most of the respondents agree that bureaucratic (4.10), restriction of entrance (4.06), duration of stay (3.94), and requirement for visa approval (3.90). However, they are uncertain about how visa fees could affect the efficiency in travel planning (3.16).

### Table 2: Visa Arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy in getting visa</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction of entrance to a country</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of stay in a country</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement for visa approval</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa fees</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Air Cargo Services**

Another important facet of the study was to determine the views of the orchestra company’s respondents pertaining to air cargo services when they go abroad for business trip. Table 3 ranks the means of the five items which represent air cargo services in the study.

### Table 3: Air Cargo Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time efficiency</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized features in handing equipments</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety measures</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cargo fares</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall mean scores and ranking of the items (based on the highest mean values) indicate that the respondents considered reliability (4.23) as the most important factor in air cargo services. This was followed by time efficiency (4.13), specialized features in handling equipments (3.94), and safety measures undertaken to ensure the music instruments were free from any damages (3.81). However, respondents have perceived cargo fares as uncertain (3.32) for air cargo services.

**Ground Transportation Services**
In the study, the respondents were also requested to rate their views on ground transportation services. The response on the 5 items of ground transportation services are shown in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Packaging services</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time efficiency</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features of carriers</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average Means Scores**
As exhibited in Table 5, packaging services provided by the ground transportation companies as well as efficiency in time during the operation by the ground transportation companies were envisioned by the respondents as the most important (both have mean scores of 4.00). Reliability on services (3.90) was perceived as the next important factor followed by features of carriers (3.65) and security (3.61).

The present study also attempted to explore all the 3 factors (visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services) based on average mean scores. Table 5 provides the mean and standard deviation scores for the 3 factors as rated by the respondents.

Table 5 shows that all the 3 factors were considered as important factors in conjunction with travel planning for an orchestra company. Ground transportation and air cargo services have higher average means scores (3.97). This is followed by visa arrangement (3.61).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground transportation services</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air cargo services</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa arrangement</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**
The present study initiated an attempt to investigate the perceptions of musicians who are working in an orchestra company concerning the efficiency in travel planning when they are travelling abroad. More specifically, the study attempted to examine how these musicians viewed visa arrangement, air cargo services and ground transportation services in terms of its importance towards travel planning.

On the basis of the overall analysis, several interesting findings can be summarized. First, the findings of the study indicate that ground transportation services, air cargo services, and visa arrangement are three important factors that can affect the efficiency in travel planning. Respondents have perceived all items in the above three factors as important except two items (visa fees and cargo fares). Respondents only rated these two items as “uncertain”.

Second, as far as the needs for efficiency in travel planning, the findings of the study show that an orchestra company needs to pay attention on the ground transportation and air cargo services as respondents ranked the average means scores for these two factors more higher than visa arrangement (see Table 5).

Third, the respondents considered bureaucracy in getting a visa (visa arrangement), reliability (air cargo services), packaging services and time efficiency (ground transportation services) as their most important
issues which can affect efficiency in travel planning. These four items received highest mean scores (see Tables 2, 3 and 4).

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, visa arrangement, ground transportation and air cargo services are important factors when an orchestra company plans to travel abroad. Failure to consider these three factors may interrupt the efficiency in travel planning. This would contribute additional administrative costs to the company when there is hiccup during the travel. From a practical managerial perspective, the findings will enable logistics managers to broaden their understanding and knowledge of the important items in the visa arrangement, ground transportation and air cargo services factors that may need to consider as important elements in panning a travel for musicians and their instruments particularly for overseas trips.

This study is limited in both research methodology and scope. The study is only looking at the one orchestra company in Malaysia. Thus, this study is suitable for a pilot study. The use of large sample size and probability sampling would be best for a future study in this area. Generalizations should also be made with caution considering the above limitation. Future study could include musicians from other orchestra companies in Malaysia.

REFERENCES


