



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



The role and impact of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) industry in Thailand

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Abstract

This research paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the pivotal role and profound impact that the MICE industry plays in the beautiful country of Thailand. An attempt has been made to give significance to this multi-billion-dollar industry, which has not only been boosting the economy of the nation but also shaping and enriching its tourism landscape. It broadly defines the concept of the MICE industry primarily going deep into the understanding of the multi-composites involved within it and meeting its diversity-strength of incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. Thus, a framework has been developed from this process, important to the ensuing analysis of Thailand's unique positionality as a Southeast Asia leader for MICE destinations. Against this background, the richness of the culture of Thailand, trademark hospitality, and the strategic geographical location are seen as major driving elements toward its success as a favorite destination for events related to MICE. The next section highlights the economic impact of the MICE Industry in Thailand. It also describes in detail, through voluminous data and rigorous analysis, the immense generation of revenue, creation of jobs, and infrastructure development in direct relation to MICE activities. This quantification acts to attest to the huge potential and transformative power that the MICE industry can bring about in the overall economic growth and prosperity of Thailand. While the paper acknowledges the astonishing success of the MICE industry, it never fails to discuss its challenges. It gives light to various challenges that are, or may be, threatening for the continued success of the industry, such as political instability and emerging competition. Additionally, environmental considerations are given due to the research, with an emphasis on the need for sustainable practices within the MICE sector. In the process of identifying these challenges, the study further identifies a set of opportunities that exist for the sustainable growth and innovation of Thailand's MICE industry. It identifies various effective strategies that could be adopted to enhance the position of Thailand within the global MICE market. This includes strategies related to increased collaboration between the government and private sectors in substantial investment in infrastructure, and a focus on promoting and implementing sustainability throughout the industry. In all, this meta-research study sends across that the MICE industry plays an important role in knowledge exchange, economic growth, and global connectivity. Thus, it creates a sense of optimism and exuberance from the comprehensive outlook toward the future potential of the MICE industry in Thailand and continued growth and success within this vibrant and diverse nation.

Keywords: MICE; MICE Industry; Impact; Thailand ; Economics; Global Economy

1. Introduction

Today, the sector of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions stands as a multi-billion-dollar giant, which is playing an increasingly major role in business, academics, and economic geography. This booming sector acts as a strong facilitator in connecting professionals from various fields by letting them share their ideas, network, and develop mutual relations. Among the many categories of the MICE industry, the four major segments have rather deep differences in analysis in their respective roles, diligently handling the unique needs and objectives of participants. Meetings, as a

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concept, are small settings that offer platforms for small groups to discuss focused matters, elaborate in brainstorming sessions, or engage in key decision-making processes. Agreed upon with a clearly articulated agenda that is availed long in advance, each meeting perfectly ensures that its participants are well-prepared, aligned, and up to date with the expected results of such a meeting. Such productive meetings greatly foster communication and provide regular attendees with an effective way of sharing their thoughts, knowledge, and multiple perspectives with clarity. In contrast, incentives are perfectly designed to instill energy, drive, and an overwhelming feeling of accomplishment into individuals and teams alike. These are skillfully designed and serve effectively as mechanisms for ensuring that productivity, creativity, and highest achievement are fostered. Be it in terms of team building, recognition programs, or performance-based rewards, incentives wholeheartedly embrace an important role in uplifting organizational morale and ultimately instilling a perpetually positive culture at work. The conference segment of this magnificent MICE industry is always bigger and way ahead of the restrictive boundaries while putting an exceptionally diversified range of professionals, experts, and adept thought leaders wonderfully and elaborately under one roof. These conferences can easily dwell upon a maximum of one or two highly specialized topics, with an assurance for the participants to get an elaborate platform pertaining to education, knowledge diffusion, and fortification of cutting-edge research. Conferences are indeed very giving to their participants by offering them an unparalleled opportunity to be a complete part of the most updated atmosphere, lucidly catch up with dynamic trends that dominate the market in their particular trade, and finally join the discussions ardently with their peers who have similarly deep passions and ambitions. The MICE industry, being an affair that has gradually become increasingly linked to the rest of the world, effortlessly extends beyond the bounds of mere national confines. These unprecedented events serve as powerful magnetic forces that incessantly draw international attendees from all corners of the globe and foster profound cross-cultural exchanges that forever transcend language, race, and ethnicity. Naturally, strenuous MICE require an immense amount of detailed planning, cannot-be-changed coordination, and spotless logistical arrangements so that every time there is perfect execution and an experience that is nothing less than unforgettable from any initial expectations held by enthusiastic participants. From efficient visa processing and comprehensive travel arrangements to orchestrating accommodation and catering services with flair, this breathtakingly diverse industry spans an enormous range of specialized services which immaculately meet the specific needs and whims of every unique attendee. Above all, it unmistakably appears that the indisputable importance of the awe-inspiring MICE industry goes far beyond the boundaries of its own realm. This pervasive sector continues, astoundingly, to contribute to an incredibly important role in the unprecedented expansion and phenomenal growth of the tourism and hospitality industries. Where the arrival of guests, both domestically and abroad, successfully percolates local economies, it brings to life numerous service-based enterprises revealingly cast throughout diverse areas worldwide. By their very nature, a host of successful businesses faithfully springs forth to meet the ceaselessly rising demands actively created and perpetuated by the phenomenal MICE events. Thus, by the same virtue, hotels, event venues, transporters, and a whole array of fine dining restaurants easily thrive while effortlessly living off the continuous demands that have been brought about by the invincible MICE events. The intricate interdependence continuously observed between the MICE industry and the undeniably vast tourism sector undoubtedly gives rise to a virtuous circle that unflinching fuels exponential economic growth and fruitfully fosters optimum collaboration between traditionally disparate industries which indeed share and sustain mutual aspirations. In other words, it has been conceivable for the ever-evolving MICE industry to surmise an influential position resolutely as a robust cornerstone of the incomparable dynamism characteristic of the modern professional world by all conceivable means. Through its boisterous and sizzling combination of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions, this ever-booming industry has truly unified professionals across various dimensions with much ease, allowing the free flow of knowledge, pressurizing continuously to aim higher and higher, and fostering global collaboration that eventually knows no bounds of time and space. It goes to show, as the time will never stop and the miracle MICE industry struggles hard to be more innovative and updated according to the requirements of the engaged participants who are always fresh with new desires, that the mark it leaves within the various and interrelated sectors is undeniably growing sharper and sharper, infinitely securing its undeniable existence in each field while being intrinsically a cornerstone that dutifully supports our boundlessly progressive professional world. As such, the fascination with this industry has grown to the level where it attracts reasonable attention from both developed and developing world economies. This sector, in its phase of vertical and horizontal expansion, points out a simple question to every nation: what is MICE's role in commerce and industry today? Also, how does it get prepared to forge influential international business relationships? A country like Thailand has also emphasized the importance of MICE, hence the need for an in-depth scrutiny of the dynamics involved in its sector. This academic article embarks on discarding any lingering ambiguity about MICE through various valuable insights about its aims, particularly about Thailand.

1.1. Definition and Scope of MICE

The term MICE mean Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. The MICE terminology expands the previously understood vocabulary of the meetings industry. These four terms give a more detailed and comprehensive explanation of segmentation within the field of business events. Each category has different characteristics, adding to the wide range

of opportunities and experiences there is in the sphere of corporate gatherings. A meeting is the coming together of two or more people to share information, make decisions, solve problems, plan, agree, share ideas, and have an elongated discussion of issues. It consists of personal interaction whereby the synergy of ideas and views is achieved. In this regard, a meeting usually encompasses all manners of format: brainstorming, team building, workshop, presentation, and collaborative session. The essence of all these is to facilitate good communication that will enhance creativity and problem-solving skills. It may also be accompanied by a question-and-answer session to make sure everything is crystal clear, and the issues are laid to rest. Incentive travel concerns the planning of a tourism event that combines employee travel away from the usual work environment with a package program of management and motivational activities. This is for the purpose of rewarding and stimulating the workers with experience and opportunities that cannot be bought. Incentive travel programs are specially designed to inspire, motivate, and reward staff and groups through journeys that may be coupled with teambuilding activities, leadership development sessions, training, and cultural experience. Superior incentives consist of luxury accommodation, special behind-the-scenes attraction access, and participation in exciting events, forwarded for serving increased employee satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, it is said that a conference brings people together where they "confer" on a topic, theme, or industry. Generally, this term is used for smaller, more focused gatherings within the business sphere. In such a setting, experts, thought leaders, and industry professionals share knowledge, insights, and experiences through keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and interactive sessions. The main goal is to share thoughts, progress, and experience in a field. Conferences permit the participants to network, collaborate, and consider new trends and technologies. Conventions, on the other hand, are larger-scale gatherings arranged by an industry to educate people, sell products and services, and connect meaningfully. Conventions are the most needed confluences where professionals share information, showcase innovations, and meet their peers. Conventions are usually held in large exhibition halls or conference centers where several booths, displays, and presentations can take place. Participants can be well informed about the latest trends within the industry, identify emerging technologies, and view product demonstrations. Complemented by these, conventions will also have keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and networking events that assure the involvement and interaction among participants. In essence, the expansion of the initial concept of MICE creates one holistic framework in meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. As such, this broader terminology manages to make the nature of business events and their objectives more understandable in depth. Everything from ideation through the collaborative meeting to the reward-based incentive program, from focused conferences on industry-specific topics to grand conventions displaying innovative products and services-the world of MICE offers endless variety, from professional growth and knowledge sharing to substantial connectors with the global business landscape. The very word 'industry' suggests a diverse grouping of people specialising and highly interested in a specific type of business, in this case, the MICE industry, which stands for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. They could be anybody, from meeting planners to conference organisers to managers of meeting venues, providers of various types of accommodation and even service providers operating mainly to ensure that the experiences of guests are memorable. Narrower, it can be viewed as a platform where planners, venue managers, and service providers get together and collaborate. Business events-also called MICE-really are a global industry in their scope, as they take place literally all over the world for any number of reasons. Whereas these conferences are aimed at merely allowing a non-regimented exchange of ideas, the various viewpoints, professional opinions, along with the special interests and professionals of the different industries in which a conference may be held create a world of complication and confusion. Therein also lies the complication of the MICE industry itself with its myriad professionals, hence making it an intricate world where one needs to be truly a jack-of-all-trades. Besides that, MICE also evolved and changed with the paradigmatic shifts in the business world outside, with developments in telecommunication and in reasonably affordable air transport. Such changing business needs and altered behavioral patterns have been shaking the grounds of this industry. Some would think that such changes could mean the demise of the MICE industry, but quite on the contrary,. In the 21st century, the facilitation of networking opportunities and creating global awareness has made the MICE industry an even more relevant and critical business activity. The wide array of activities involved in the MICE industry makes it one of the largest contributors to knowledge dissemination among influential experts and professionals, especially researchers and those at the frontline of recent discoveries and methods of research. This is also a good platform that provides an opportunity to share effective knowledge and continuous opportunities for development and cooperation. The real value of the impact and worth of the MICE industry include how well it can distribute useful knowledge and create opportunities that enable economic growth through knowledge-based industries. A new trend in the MICE industry now starts to take form: Virtual and hybrid events. These innovative formats have revolutionized the way events are run, making them far more accessible, efficient, and economical for many people. This paradigm shift has ensured that MICE industry is very far from becoming obsolete but instead continuously evolves and adapts to the dynamically changing needs and preferences of people around the world. In a nutshell, the MICE industry has become one of the major drivers of knowledge-based economic growth, enabling increased sharing of expertise, ideas, and innovation across borders. Even though industry is constantly adapting and modernizing to the new technologies put into use, it remains resilient and vital in the constant change within the business world. The MICE industry is more than the venue for one event; it is a

driver of economic development, an enabler for change, and a platform where people and organizations come together and inspire their futures.

1.2. Thailand as a MICE Destination

Generation after generation of sedentary communities, with a remarkable multi-variety of ethnic and cultural entities, have been constantly and progressively weaving the glory into the tableau called Thailand. The integration became a fusion of gems that were superior to ever, and an appeal unique in all respects that was diffused to captivate the hearts of the world visitors beyond borders. It is this rich heritage that forms the basis of the locality's hospitality, which so comfortably merges with a thriving culture, enchanting history, tradition, arts, and architecture that all seem to cast a spell of irresistible charm upon the globe-trotting MICE visitor. At the heart of Southeast Asia, Thailand's strategic geographical location is proving an exceptionally strong advantage, with convenience to international travelers unparalleled anywhere else in the world. In addition, the rich natural resources and breathtaking beauty of the nation speak nothing but vitality to this dream destination. The admiration for such greatness is well manifested in how a multitude of multinational enterprises has opted for Thailand as an ideal place for intra-regional headquarters or production bases. A sizeable number of locals with profound understanding of international business routines further enhances Thailand's appeal as an event destination. Recognized organizations in search of a perfect venue for their successful events will have confidence in Thailand's experienced professionals for unmatched services and expertise anywhere else. The issue of safety is always high among the organizers of events, and Thailand pride themselves on offering a safe venue that lets them have full confidence in its capabilities. Stability and a secure environment taken for granted in Thailand banish unnecessary anxieties, enabling the event organizer to focus on one thing: the resounding success of his event. The international events market in Southeast Asia has but two members: Thailand and Singapore. In fact, in 2016, Thailand became the undisputed host of the most international events among its neighbors in Southeast Asia. This turns out to be one more added feather in the bow that further cements Thailand's unmatched prowess to deliver an exceptional experience for events. Having said that, as a shining example of creating an unforgettable backdrop for international events with grace and finesse, many remarkable occasions have been held in the vibrant metropolis of Bangkok. The event left such an indelible impression in the minds of all participants that it stands out as a mark of great capability of Thailand in organizing memorable events with a remembered touch always left in the minds of all those fortunate enough to participate in these. For visitors' satisfaction, in-depth research arranged by eight prestigious universities worldwide has conducted the survey from a large number of international conference delegates and industry executives for a deeper look into what makes Thailand outstanding. The results of this comprehensive research clearly showed that Thailand indeed boasts a fine array of world-class, sumptuous 5-star international hotel properties fully accredited for renowned service and ultimate in lavish amenities. The interviewees in the research also showed much enthusiasm when espousing that Thailand can serve as an excellent destination for business ventures. The feeling was largely contributed by the fabled "Thai smile," which is a cultural icon that represents nothing but supreme guest service and epitomes the meaning of professionalism. In their personal experiences, interviewees pointed out that Thai people, famous for being warm-hearted, demonstrate very special politeness, generosity, and hospitality to guests. It is this unique confluence of characteristics that makes an environment that is as much warm as it is comforting and trusting. Coupled with its exceptional hospitality, Thailand has been achieving incredible feats of infrastructural development and state-of-the-art facilities needed for the booming tourist industry. Such strides place Thailand at the forefront of event technology, adding a unique sheen to its status as an international destination for meetings and events. Advanced technology in this regard has completely transformed the scale of events while increasing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of different conferences, exhibitions, and conventions held within its territory. Undoubtedly, since the second half of the 20th century, the industry of MICE in Thailand has grown with exponential proportions, which recently has been accelerated even further. In fact, the targeted number of MICE travelers was outmatched when the Thai MICE industry broke all records in 2016 with a remarkable inflow of MICE tourists arriving in Thailand. This simply translated to a remarkable year-on-year growth in MICE arrivals and sealed Thailand as a premier destination for international conferences and events. The positive direction of the growth of the MICE industry is not hedged within just one single year but can be forecast to continue into the near future. With the current growth rate, added to the relentless effort that the Thai government and industry players have invested in, there is no doubt that Thailand is set to retain its elite status as the number one MICE destination in Southeast Asia. This industry will undoubtedly continue to play an important role in contributing to the nation's thriving economy and further propelling Thailand onto the global stage as one of the most desired countries to hold international events and conferences in.

1.3. Key Factors Contributing to Thailand's Attractiveness

Traditionally, Thailand has been one of the major prime tourist destinations of the world. While over the years it grew considerably in its reputation as a prime leisure destination, it is now emerging as one of the current leaders in the MICE world. Traditional marketing methods have long driven MICE events, but more innovative and specialty marketing

methods have recently been employed to further spark the interest of potential participants. It is, however, important to note that no matter how well an event is marketed, the product underneath it all must be substantial. No amount of promotion will ever be able to bridge that gap between a wanted destination for MICE and actuality without a fundamental beginning. In establishing the suitability or aptitude of a destination for MICE, there are two major prerequisites taken into consideration. First amongst these is the ease of travel to and from the destination. In other words, there must be accessibility which means the MICE travelers need an easy way of reaching the destination. Convenient transportation should be there, such as having an airport, good public transportation, and reliable road networks. Second, it should possess available MICE and travel products that the place should offer. In this case, it is important to note that a destination must have professional conference centers fitted with modern facilities to run the different types of MICE events. Besides, provision for different categories of hotel accommodation is essential to meet the varied tastes and preferences of MICE tourists. Smooth experience right from the beginning to the end is the key factor that guarantees the success of any MICE event. One essential factor to note is that most MICE tourists are also directly related to the tourism sector. Their destinations are more prone to various influencing factors. Besides the on-site facilities and services, MICE tourists give much thought to natural settings, local traditions, and culture attractions. The general attractiveness of a destination, from natural wonders to cultural heritage, plays an important role in the choice of a MICE traveler. Most recently, the field of cultural innovation has become a battleground. MICE tourists would more and more head towards destinations that do not only welcome their traditional cultural experience but also modern development. For MICE tourism, the business has become one of finding a perfect balance between cultural heritage and contemporary development. Thailand, with its dynamic culture, beautiful landscapes, and friendly people, has certainly emerged as one of the front-runners in the MICE business. From the world-class conferences that the country hosts, right from the lines of ancient temples to delectable culinary delights, the experience will be etched in one's memory forever. Mixed with the commitment of the country to improve its MICE infrastructure, an irresistible charm of modern conveniences makes Thailand certainly an ideal choice for any MICE event. As far as marketing effort is concerned, recognition of and respect for a national role, be it government or otherwise, is fundamental, as the reputation of any country is beyond the control of private entrepreneurs and is contingent upon a variety of external factors. While building the convention centers, the Thai government is formulating and amending all the policies related to MICE to attract suitable firms from the MICE industry in Thailand and abroad for expanding their exhibition venues and hotels. For this, there are various incentives available like tax breaks, visa reductions, or reductions in the power costs and communication expenses of these centers. In the modern integration of Thailand into the ASEAN community, the country should therefore realize a policy value between a regional advantage taken by Thailand as a destination for business tourists and MICE, local and fair tourism. Such efforts were quantitatively assessed as effective due to the great number of people in Thailand who have viewed such activities in the mentioned role. In addition to the many awards won, numerous national and international MICE events have been held in Thailand. The deeper the discussion on marketing effort has gone, the more apparent it has become that the recognition and respect for the national roll-whoever's it is-are of utmost importance. After all, the reputation of a country is something quite beyond the influence of private entrepreneurs and heavily depends on a lot of external factors. While convention centers sprout and blossom with zeal, the Thai government is also busy designing and adjusting MICE policies to attract proper companies in the MICE industry, both in Thailand and other countries, to develop its exhibition areas and luxury hotels within the kingdom. This ambitious undertaking is moved forward by a range of incentives that include enticing tax breaks to reduce the visa fees and right up to cost-cutting measures related to the power consumption and communication expenses for these magnificent MICE centers. However, what is more important is that Thailand should fully realize the intrinsic value of policy directions that connect the regional advantage of Thailand as an attractive destination for business tourists with the emerging areas of MICE, domestic tourism, and responsible equitable tourism as part of a nation of higher integration in the ASEAN community. The excellence in these earnest efforts is correctly reflected in the thousands of people who have been privileged enough to see Thailand rise to such prominence. This success is underlined not only in the many awards that Thailand has received but also in the numbers of prestigious national and international MICE events it has received the right to host-a true testimony to its stature as the incomparable destination for these exciting events.

1.4. Economic Impact of MICE Industry in Thailand

Over the last couple of years, MICE has developed into an important economic contributor in various countries such as Thailand around the world. The objective of this chapter is to go a little more into the details of this thriving industry; to talk to quality discussions, knowledge-sharing events, marketing and promotion activities, as well as the greater significance and economic value from a holistic and systems-based approach of the MICE industry in Thailand. The country has been involved in business travel and events in Southeast Asia for quite a long time and has contributed significantly to industry. Curiously, however, no comprehensive and absolute account is made of the exact role, impact, and potential of an industry like MICE in available literature. This knowledge gap urgently needs some attention and delves into the same. Our pioneering, comprehensive study therefore purports to fill this important and timely gap in

the much-required update on the MICE sector in Thailand. It brings into perspective the various and extensive impacts which this industry has on the national economy, while putting a high value and impact on it. Our findings show that the direct and indirect economic benefits derived from the MICE industry in Thailand are massive in number and reality. These most assuredly establish the industry as a solid catalyst for growth, development, and prosperity. Apart from provoking innovation inland, the MICE sector creates several jobs, attracts foreign investment, and enhances the national competitive advantage. It is undeniably dynamic and one of the solid elements of modern Thai economic reality. In this comprehensive analytical insight, we go so far as to give an overall description of the current state of the MICE industry and predict its bright prospects for the future. In this light, we would like to pronounce an industry that will play a strategic role in driving Thailand's future towards its position of an economic hub and provide an interpretation of long-term sustainability. This report will delve into these critical factors, such as infrastructure, business environment, government support, and engagement with stakeholders, making it a handbook and fundamental tool for policymakers, industry professionals, researchers, and stakeholders from walks of life interested in the MICE industry in Thailand. It means that our study provides them with useful and meaningful information, enabling the decision-makers to actively exercise their options, formulate useful strategies, and take part in the sustained development and improvement of the Thai MICE sector. In fact, the MICE industry is much more important than merely the economic benefits. Indeed, this was research that captured and magnified the deep impact, unraveling the ripples of such an effect to include societal progress, cultural exchange, and global integration. As Thailand works to position itself as a hub in global MICE and to capitalize on the unlimited possibilities afforded by this industry, further research, innovation, and collaboration bear prime importance. These will doubtless be invaluable insights and recommendations to constitute a guiding light for the sustainable development and success of the Thai MICE industry towards prosperity, inclusiveness, and vibrancy. It is our hope, through this extensive research, that all stakeholders will be motivated and empowered to get involved in the growth and development of the MICE sector not just within the nation but also internationally. In 2017, the direct spending contributed by the attendees in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions industry went up as high as 115.09 billion baht. This massive chunk trickled down the Thai economy, accounting for an estimated circulation of 250 billion baht. The services directly involved with the MICE industry contributed a huge amount of 157 billion baht, while an extra 28 billion baht was spent on personal expenses. Besides this, the sports events organized in the country cannot be left behind. These events also marked the development of public infrastructure and further developed various public services in towns and cities across the country. The government realized the potential of the MICE sector and integrated the industry with their overall tourism strategies and events. This is amazing to see how well the MICE industry has grown over the years. From a humble attendance of just 20,000 people in 2002, the number exploded to over one million visitors in 2013. Most of the MICE activities were international conferences and meetings, accompanied by some much smaller scale international exhibitions and trade fairs. The actual number of attendees can't be really ascertained since many factors come into play when determining the number. Conversely, being a whole-of-government strategy, the number of attendees can be influenced by many variables. The local businesses have also given their own testimonials of the projected economic benefits from the MICE attendees, with businesses even suggesting some of the poll questions that can be used to determine the level of participation and the success of the event. Indeed, the year 2017 alone saw a total of 13,000 overseas visitors attending three summits held in the Eastern Economic Corridor. Overseas visitors were put up in five-star, luxurious hotels in Bangkok and Pattaya. Not only that, but the prestigious Royal Cliff Resorts are also semi-government owned and have been the venue of their event. Most importantly, Thailand was also privileged to host in the same year the annual conference, ministerial summit, and tourism forum in the Greater Mekong sub-region. The premier event was trail-blazed by a large exhibition covering the Mekong Region consisting of six countries including southern China. Events of this size and profile underpin the value and impact of MICE business in the region.

1.5. Revenue Generation and Job Creation

Revenue and GDP Generation the MICE industry in Thailand has generated significant new revenue since 1997. In 2007, Thailand successfully hosted a total of 482 international MICE events, or approximately 94% of the target, and attracted approximately 17% more international MICE visitors than in 2006. Over US\$349 million of direct expenditures, roughly 1.9% of Thailand's 2007 overseas tourism revenues, was directly contributed by the international MICE visitors, the highest value since 1997. Held in the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, the mainstay of the event was international conventions, which accounted for 90.9% of the direct expenditure total. While international travel incentives and campaigns, therefore, directly accounted for more than a two-fold increase from 2006 to 2007 and accounted for only 1.7% of the total due to smaller gatherings in the kingdom. This increment in the revenue and visitors reflects the rising influence of the MICE industry in Thailand. Not only did Thailand surpass the targeted number of international MICE events last year, but the number of visitors to the events has also risen considerably. The upward trend symbolizes the ability of the MICE industry to attract and entertain many different types of participants worldwide. With 349 million US\$ in direct expenditures, Thailand's international MICE visitors generated a sizeable revenue contribution to its economy in the year 2007. This was a healthy 1.9% of the country's total overseas tourism

revenue for that year. A sizeable financial contribution of this nature underlines the economic impact that the MICE industry is making upon Thailand, and further cements its standing as one of the country's major revenue earners. Events of this nature were held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center. International conventions were, in fact, the leading contributor to direct expenditure, accounting for as much as 90.9 percent of MICE visitors' overall spending. This again points to the conventions' significance not only in bringing in foreigners but also in ensuring that there would be more intensive spending in terms of hotel accommodation, food, transportation, and other services. And of course, the efficiency of international travel incentives and campaigns in 2007 should not be left unmentioned as well. While there were fewer events and smaller delegations in the kingdom, direct spending by these endeavors nonetheless more than doubled compared to the previous year. This accounted for just 1.7 percent of total direct expenditure; the figure does, nonetheless, illustrate how effective targeted promotional campaigns can be in attracting high-value MICE visitors to the country. In other words, since 1997, Thailand's MICE industry has grown significantly in the revenue generated and visitors received. Hosting 482 international events in MICE in 2007, and the remarkable growth of its international MICE visitors, proves that the Thai MICE industry can attract the world market. Besides, the major financial contribution provided by these visitors, mainly through international conventions, underlines the economic importance of the MICE industry in Thailand. Success in international travel incentives and campaigns further exemplifies that Thailand is a prime destination for MICE events. Between the period of 2002-2007 alone, where interest from mainly groups based in the Asia-Pacific and Europe started pouring to the Land of Smiles, MICE assistance measures at the DOT and the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau translated conventions in several countries. These conferences also used to serve both smaller groups and larger meetings, incentive travel, conventions and exhibitions events, with 8,600 people on average. Events like these contribute much to the Thai economy, whereby estimates of the amount used in 2007 alone stood at about 24 billion Baht, about 0.5 % of the total spending. Apart from that, the interest to visit received also enriched those industrial sectors that were directly desired and accommodated the same participants during their various arrivals in hotels. In effect, Thai economy benefited from such organized MICE events with some 1.0 billion Baht of output, which is +10.3% from the two desired industrial sectors for the year 2007, by the 358,032 MICE participants attracted. For a complete impact analysis, the total amount of direct, indirect, and induced expenses to GDP in 2007 is considered. In all, 9.4 billion Baht, which was the GDP, was drawn with an increase of 8.57% from the spending by 329,885 people who participated in MICE events, while 160,617 MICE exhibitors provided 17.2 billion Baht for GDP with an increase of 5.62%. 890 or so MICE exhibitors collectively spent 865.5 million Baht to present their products and services at various MICE events during 2007. These presentations and displays cover a broad range of activities that can be of interest to both local and overseas companies having direct or indirect interest in the inbound MICE industry. For the above exhibitors, the total output generated from their activities was 139.6 million Baht - a huge amount for Thai Economy. Conclusion From the year 2002 to the year 2007, there was a tremendous increase in the group interests of Asia-Pacific and Europe in Thailand's MICE industry. With this growing interest along with the active support mechanisms developed by DOT and TCEB, there were various conventions that were organized. These events drew large numbers of participants into the country for considerable economic benefit to the desired industrial sectors, hotels, and the Thai economy.

1.6. Challenges and Opportunities for the MICE Industry in Thailand

The MICE industry is one of the thriving and dynamic sectors. Several old and new players have started leaving their mark with intense organizational strength and excellent promotional skills in this evolving scenario in the Asia-Pacific region. In Thailand, which boasts a very lively MICE industry, the recent political developments internally have badly affected the sector. This has led to the sad cancellation of so many anticipated international conventions over the years, which then drastically hurt the sector. The MICE community in Thailand, like the tourism industry, has also seen the deterrence effects brought about by global crises like the SARS outbreak and the recently unprecedented global pandemic. These events have imposed enormous challenges and forced the stakeholders to accept rapid changes in the ever-changing business world. Along with the challenges, another central issue involves the natural environment that has taken the limelight of industry. The two-way consequences of this natural environment involve site and resource deterioration along with their urgent preservation and maintenance needs. While sustainability is of utmost importance to stakeholders these days, practitioners are deflecting their efforts towards creativity in the field to minimize negativity to the environment, delivering excellence in the MICE experience. Home to the exotic East and purple smiles, Thailand has been a paradise for MICE delegates alike over the last decade. A destination marketing strategy needs to be constructed on the need for a revisit of some of the fundamental paradigms of yore-whether it is essential to assert or promote the well-being of a brand. Undeniably, the MICE industry is quite crucial for Thailand. This is true especially in the case of the manifold opportunities for growth as depicted during the rise of industry in the last decade and a half. Thirdly, policy recommendations and strategies will be needed to guide future efforts. Seriously, efforts towards a balance of planning and development for all partners in the MICE industry-which include at least the three main ones of central government, private sector, and via co-operation of chambers of commerce associations and local community-must be made. Other diversified regional promotion plans of Thailand on MICE are well-guided, especially in major

Asian locations, to capitalize on hype if lack of space cannot be enforced. Successful rehabilitation of convention and exposition industry can well be reflected in various locations and their smaller counterparts. To prolong our competitiveness further, we must keep innovators. Install new management teams in their place that can initiate and distinguish programs from the initiatives offered by our neighbors, developed within an inclusive community of successful businesses. It has never been more important. Thailand is a word synonymous with enchantment, a country that overwhelms visitors with its rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes, and warm hospitality. From bustling cityscapes to pristine beaches, this vibrant country has a plethora of experiences for MICE delegates who combine business with leisure. A strategic destination marketing plan will go a long way in tapping the unrealized potential and ensuring sustained growth of the MICE industry in Thailand. As we embark on our journey, it becomes important that we question traditional paradigms and redefine the very concept of brand promotion. After that, the MICE industry has proven to be one of the high-priority contributors to Thailand's economic prosperity and a field that offers immense opportunities for further expansion and development. Considering the past success and future directions, the formulation of effective policy recommendations and strategic initiatives will shape the future path of the industry. Cooperation among stakeholders is considered crucial for achieving progress and catalyzing innovation in the field of MICE. The central government, private sector, chambers of commerce, associations, and community are required to stage a choreographed orchestra toward contributing to sustainable growth. Thai regional promotion plans for MICE are appropriately directed, especially to major Asian centers where we hope to capitalize on the current buzz and demand, even with its space constraints. Starting from mega cities down to minor but no less interesting cities, the resurgence of the convention and exposition industry can be seen. Indeed, it is vital for us to further our competitive advantage by promoting a culture of innovation continuously. It also calls for the establishment of dynamic management teams that have the vision and acumen to lead transformational programs, making our offerings different from our neighboring countries. Nurturing a vibrant ecosystem of growing businesses could go hand in hand with shaping the future of Thailand's MICE industry and bringing it up to new heights of excellence and success. Let us get conquered by the beauty of Thailand, where business and fun go together, and let us make this fantastic journey together.

1.7. Sustainability and Environmental Concerns

On the other hand, the MICE industry is also reputed to have some potential liabilities on the environment, such as degrading quality of life for residents, diminishing natural capital, and impairing social infrastructure. With the growth in awareness and the stakeholder feeling that sustainable practices matter, many event organizers nowadays are trying to look for modern ways of creating a sustainable event and making it greener. Most large-scale events or conferences are successfully performed by broad and judicious strategic planning, professional site selection, and painstaking project management to ensure a hassle-free experience for all the participants involved. These may involve hiring a proficient team of employees and volunteers, effective advertising through the press, radio, television, and other media, and very cautious selection of influential speakers and invitation of enthusiastic participants representing various groups. The venues where events take place are plentiful and varied: from richly chosen, first-class hotels to beauty-embracing outdoor sites. However, attention should be given to the carrying capacities of destinations or venues in order not to have potential problems brought about by too many attendees. Congestion, pollution, resource depletion, and waste of community and public service could be some of the problems if the volume of participants became beyond the sustainable capacities. Unfortunately, improper or excessive use of venues has the potential even to create major social burdens and affect the community negatively, thereby damaging both social and environmental quality. With a view to overcoming these potential issues in one way or another and securing the sustainability of events, organizations are increasingly embracing innovative approaches. A holistic approach includes not only reducing negative impacts but also, at the same time, enhancing positive outcomes by behaving responsibly. These are some development approaches being focused upon: waste minimization and recycling, efficient use of energy and water, and reduction of carbon emission. The substitution of greener alternatives into the operation will be assisting event organizers in protecting natural resources, reducing ecological footprints, and encouraging well-being among host communities. The events will also, through the development of partnerships within the local economy, that is, with businesses and suppliers where sustainability is a main concern, have multiplier effects through the support of the local economy and sustainable practices across sectors. Thirdly, events should ensure efficient stakeholder communication and education about the management of sustainable events. Raising awareness among attendees, exhibitors, sponsors, and the greater community on the need for environmentally responsible behavior is important. Organizing informative sessions, workshops, and campaigns that contribute towards a greener future will further inspire and empower the participants to make conscious choices. The collaboration between industry professionals, environmental experts, and community representatives will further innovation and best practice exchange be enabling continuous improvement of managing sustainable events. In a nutshell, although the MICE industry promises a myriad of benefits, it also has potential negative effects on the environment and social structure. The strategic planning of an event, responsible management of resources, involvement of various stakeholders, and priorities for sustainability help ensure that the negative impacts are at their minimal and positive outcomes are at their maximum by event organizers themselves. Events can be drivers

of change towards greener practices by creating awareness, inspiring action, and enhancing the well-being of the natural environment and that of the local communities. In managing the MICE business, the most important dimension an operator or destination manager can consider is sustainability. All kinds of environmental management strategies aimed at protecting local ecosystems and ensuring the sustainable exploitation of biological resources, reduction of waste and carbon emissions, improvement in energy efficiency-were proposed, initiated, or even already put into practice by many governmental, nongovernmental, and corporate entities. Attempts and efforts toward making the MICE industry a more sustainable range from watershed management projects to grand certification programs and standards. From the use of public transporters to waste reduction, innovative sustainable event management practices were adopted both by the young and old throughout the place. The event attendees are overwhelmingly interested in undergoing training in sustainable events practices. This shows an increased understanding of the benefits of sustainable MICE practice, especially the opportunities to attract more open and globally minded visitors. The government has promoted efforts aimed at developing MICE with good practices. the target of metals industries, environmentally friendly targets for MICE industry. In the MICE industry the sustainability has turned out to be a major phenomenon when it comes to the management of the business, the operators and destination managers realize its importance in terms of environment and economy, local ecosystems protection and conservation of biological resources exploitation so as to make sure that their use is sustainable, various governmental, non-governmental, corporate bodies are proposing and implementing environmental management strategies. The aim here is not only to reduce waste and carbon emissions but also to enhance the efficiency of energy within this industry. The MICE industry has also created several practices which are effective and innovative to meet the demand for sustainability: a few perfect the watershed management projects, institute certification programs, and enact comprehensive standards. During this age of sustainable event management, both new and established practices have developed everywhere from the use of public transportation to waste management policies worldwide. Indeed, these practices have taken over every nook and corner of the industry. Surprisingly, interests received from event delegates in training in sustainable events practices have been overwhelming, proving an increase in awareness of benefits derived from sustainable MICE practices. Therefore, the great potential that exists within sustainable practices has been felt in MICE industries with the influx of open-minded and globally conscious visitors. Notably, with the immense benefits witnessed in sustainable MICE practices, governments around the world have increased their efforts toward developing this sector by implementing good practices. By setting targets and providing benchmarks on sustainability for industry, the government has made sure that adoption and promotion of environmentally friendly practices in the metals industry come first in order to ensure a MICE sector that is not only successful but also balanced with the environment. The different governments have gone out of their way to advocate for sustainability, as reflected by the myriad initiatives they have put in place with the purpose of enhancing environmental care. Examples include protection of the local ecosystems and ensuring sustainable utilization of biological resources. Further, these agencies have embraced elaborate plans geared toward waste minimization, carbon emission reduction, and efficiency in energy utilization in the MICE industry. Several events management practices have, therefore, come forward to bring about ecological preservation into requirement. These diverse measures range from watershed management projects to the establishment of stern certification and standardized protocols. These strategies have revolutionized this industry and caught broad attention due to their efficiency in achieving long-term environmental harmony. Sustainability has become a signature of events invented from fresh to long-standing ones, on full display in the MICE industry across the world stage. These have trickled into every segment of the industry that involves encouraging the use of public transportation and formulating waste reduction strategies, signifying deep-seated commitment toward sustainability. This suggests a growing number of event attendees may be interested in how to get training on sustainable events practices, therefore raising awareness of the inherent benefits that are derived from the approach. In that regard, the MICE industry has, over time, seen a significant upward trajectory in environmentally conscious visitors, placing further emphasis on huge potential existing for sustainability practices to drive the success of this industry. Because of the numerous benefits brought about by sustainable MICE practices, governments from all over the world have embraced industry and are increasingly working to foster its growth through the implementation of ideal environmental policies. It is due to this that the government has chosen to adopt and promote environmentally friendly practices within the metals industry with the hope that not only will the MICE sector attain economic prosperity but also that it would exist in perfect harmony with the environment. By setting targets and benchmarks for sustainability, the government is trying to make this sector a model example of responsible and ecologically sensitive business practices within the MICE industry.

2. Conclusion and Future Outlook

In sum, the MICE industry has contributed significantly to the country's economy - both directly and indirectly. The impact of the MICE industry will further be improved once the existing challenges are successfully addressed and strong on-going cooperation between all parties is firmly established. Another meaningful task is the involvement of the community in the MICE industry, which needs further development and diversification in the future into non-conventional business events to maintain competitive advantage and avoid disruptions that may happen, such as health

crises and other unforeseen circumstances. In recent years, global trends have combined much more strongly with the MICE industry, including Industry 4.0 and digital transformation, opening new opportunities and challenges. Apart from all the issues regarding negative health and environmental impacts of business travel, the international community trusts Thailand in the sense that the government has shown strong resolve to elevate MICE events to higher levels, including hosting mega events. This necessitates the formulation of clear policies and the driving of innovation and adaptability to sail through changing landscapes. Diversification of activities among locations is therefore recommended, with the purpose of developing sustainable tourism projects and responsible business events. In the long run, it will no longer be recognized as a "MICE" industry, as business events are now being one of the drivers of socio-economic progress comprising education, trade, and health activities, among others, and hence requires absorption of the business sector in such activities to ensure full trade potential and progress. Undoubtedly, Thailand has played a significant role in the MICE industry as it provides a crucial trading area in the global market. Because of the forecast of up to 2 million meetings attended by over 10 million individuals, its market will join the top five of the Asia-Pacific regions and demonstrate its remarkable ability competing with the European countries. The digital economy would act as an important tool to help extend the market base and increase the market share of Thailand globally. In addition, the appeal of places and facilities must be developed to gain full status for Thailand as a destination for MICE. For dust-stress events, industry must also develop techniques to reduce dust and build resilience against health crises. Equally importantly, relations with the future leaders of the global MICE market should be developed for the establishment of relationships and realization of new opportunities for growth. In general, prospects for the Thai MICE industry look very good, and all indications are that growth and potential in many fields are at hand. This is an industry which, by diversifying products, entering new markets, making more money, and having an even broader economic impact, possesses the potential to use current technological developments and stand on top of global trends. Thailand has the potential to strengthen its position and emerge as a leading force among key players within the MICE industry. First, what is needed is unequivocal demonstration by the government of its steadfast pledge to unequivocally support the industry through well-defined policies. Beyond that, collaboration and cooperation amongst all stakeholders will be essential for the continued success and growth of the MICE industry. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the importance of international business events is going to further grow; it therefore goes without saying that Thailand needs to maintain and broaden its share of the market. With unrivaled capabilities and continuous dedication to innovation, Thailand is set for nothing but the best in this dynamic, ever-changing MICE world, marking its position as a truly global leader.

Strategies for Enhancing Thailand's Position in the Global MICE Market

The strategies for enhancing Thailand's position in the global MICE industry include the following:

- The Thai government and private sectors should work together to develop Thailand's position in the minds of professional meeting planners and the larger ASEAN MICE market as one that is both elegant and standing above the clutter of neighboring countries. In collaboration, the establishment of an International Marketing Representation Office shall be done with TCEB to handle all public relationship activities and the bigger roadmap plan for attracting neuralgic and organically connected events for growing Cluster Centers of Thailand and extend the MICE events into the off-season.
- The government should not wait but proactively collaborate with stakeholders to identify and remove policies that act as a barrier for event growth to allow air cargo, medical, health, and wellness tourists, and MICE to grow. How policy dialogue can include neutralizing feared violence or understanding the conflict-generating threat, including policy options for Thailand.
- The infrastructure at venues of conventions in Bangkok and key source destinations where above-the-line campaigns target should be on just-in-time investment to accommodate a sudden surge of business following announcements of event rights bids. An improved transportation network with expansion at airports and an enhancement in the railway system will ensure easy access and movement of delegates to and from any MICE event within the country. Indeed, this will go a long way toward positioning Thailand as a destination of choice for international conferences and exhibitions.

With such strategies, Thailand will have a good opportunity to strongly raise its status in the global marketplace for MICE. These investments will enable professional off-site event and convention service providers to make even more positive impressions and word-of-mouth when they have more space to plan an event and maintain the original set-up of the convention onsite at the venue. Additionally, a better educated bid team will capture more multimillion-dollar inbound event contracts for Thailand than from a new supply of more aggressive convention sellers. Thailand should

reinforce its partnership with international organizations as the appropriate public relations offices for it to project more integrative influence on regional and worldly levels. Professional departmental and regional networking levels should share resources in projecting integrated destinations and attend conferences that will do joint advertisements in industry publications locally distributed among the decision-makers. Thailand should project its leadership in green MICE and teaching combined MICE and voluntourism. The Thai Government should look at the road to creating space whereby Thailand can eternally be number one and a first choice for any country in the region for MICE, focusing on sustainable practices and responsible tourism. Thailand should upgrade and innovate in convention sales to attract new clients. Thailand can no longer sell hard traditional locations. It must use modern technologies and software to be able to sell its unique services of the intermediary space, together with other distributed events. The adoption of virtual and hybrid events would allow it, therefore, to reach bigger audiences beyond those physically congregating in venues. The problems of skill shortages in the key customer-contact areas, such as transportation, need to be equipped with full-scale professionalism programs on all international viruses that interest and can affect people who come for international conferences. The added capability of making us all 'virus experts' capable of dealing with new outbreaks is not as important as the fact that we will have learned the science of viral and human interaction and be in a position to help international conference organizers rationalize their decisions about holding or cancelling a conference with the right local and risk assessment data presented on a usable alert scale rather than just an overly ambiguous one-to-six alert color scale. That is a specific labor market for which Thailand can be defined, providing that type of service-essential to the MICE industry. Those are the individuals that need to be trained now, so the safety and well-being of event attendees are guaranteed, and Thailand does not lose its reputation as a host in good standing. Thus, it will go down in the psyches of attendees from every part of the globe that Thailand has marked territory as a big player in the events and convention services market. This will translate into more multimillion-dollar contracts from highly competitive event organizers, with the increased space and resources available in the country. With such strong partnerships forged between Thailand and international organizations, the latter will project an influential global role and further establish its position as a favorite destination for conferences and events. Besides, the commitment to green MICE and voluntourism will show leadership for sustainable practices and responsible tourism. Thailand will develop its convention sales by embracing modern technology and software to showcase the country's one-of-a-kind services and distributed events. These will be extended into virtual and hybrid events that reach a larger, more diversified audience than just physical venues. Thailand realizes that the handling of skill shortages is important and will, therefore, make comprehensive professionalism programs on international viruses that threaten conference members. This will not only provide professionals with outbreak handling expertise but also allow informed decisions on the scheduling of conferences using correct local and risk assessment data. Such positioning of Thailand as a specialist in this niche market would provide an essential service to support the MICE industry while ensuring the safety and good health of event participants, as a responsible host country. With these strategic measures in place, Thailand's status as the number one preferred destination for MICE will be further cemented, while enhancing its influence at the global level. While positioning itself as solidly influential on the world stage, Thailand will be made to appear as the world's prime destination for MICE. These various investments not only upgrade the expertise and capacity of off-site event and convention service providers but create a lasting and positive word-of-mouth when they are able to utilize additional space to organize events while maintaining the convention's original set-up at the venue. Moreover, a more informed bid team will significantly raise Thailand's chances of winning outbound multimillion-dollar event contracts, thus staying ahead of the competition even for new and more aggressive convention sellers. On the international front, Thailand may try to forge closer ties with international bodies serving as vital public relation offices. This will, in turn, permit Thailand to project an increasingly influential and integrated regional and global role, positioning itself as one of the leading players in the conference and event industry. Resources need to be invested in, and collaboration pursued regarding integrated destination projects at professional departmental and regional networking levels. These will enhance not only the conference experience but also allow for joint advertisements in widely read industry publications by decision-makers. Thailand also needs to showcase leadership in green MICE and embrace combined concepts of MICE and voluntourism. This is how, by focusing on sustainability and responsible tourism, Thailand will position itself as a leader in these fields that keep evolving. The Government of Thailand should seriously explore all avenues for keeping Thailand perpetually as the regional leader in MICE. This could well be accomplished with a strong orientation toward sustainability and responsible tourism. Further, Thailand needs to engage in convention sale techniques and look to attracting new customers. It is not enough to rely on physical locations; rather, it needs to use top-notch technologies and software to promote the various services of its intermediary spaces and dispersed events. Moreover, Thailand should adopt virtual and hybrid events to access an even wider audience and have more variety than physical venues can allow. Skill shortages must be urgently addressed, especially in those important customer-contact sectors, such as transportation. Thailand should, therefore, institute comprehensive professionalism programs that arm professionals with in-depth knowledge about international viruses that may affect the conference attendees. This way, a professional can assist in making prudent decisions concerning hosting or the cancellation of a conference-by-conference organizer and become an expert in handling viral outbreaks. This calls for correct local and risk assessment data on a usable-and-usable alert scale, not some too-ambiguous color-coded alert system or scheme. Thailand can carve

out a niche in its job market and establish itself as a provider of essential services to the MICE industry. Efforts need to be channeled into the training of professionals in this regard, securing and ensuring that there is safety for guests attending events, but also that the standing of Thailand as a prudent and sensible host is not blemished. This will ensure that Thailand stays ahead of its competitors as a service provider in events and convention services and shall leave a mark on the attendees worldwide. This will further make available increased space and resources to attract multimillion-dollar contracts from highly competitive event organizers. Through international organizations' strategic collaborations, Thailand is bound to project a stronger influence on its global role and reinforce the status of preferred destination for conferences and events. Besides this, the commitment to green MICE and voluntourism already well-advanced in Thailand will bring with it leadership in the field of sustainable practices and responsible tourism, too. Thailand will revolutionize their convention sales to stay ahead of industry trends by engaging in modern technology and software, which can actuate the unique services of distributed events within the country. Embracing virtual and hybrid events involves opening Thailand to a wider audience, possibly even beyond those attending physical venues. Thailand will implement comprehensive professionalism programs in international viruses that could pose a threat to people attending conferences, since recognizing skill shortages as significant to address. By being proactive, if an outbreak occurs, professionals will be prepared with the right expertise, and the right decisions will be made based on accurate data related to local and risk assessment. This, in effect, further helps Thailand position itself as the specialist in this niche market, catering to the needs of the MICE industry, ensuring the safety and well-being of all participants of such meetings, while upholding the reputation for being responsible hosts. These strategic moves will position Thailand as the number one destination for MICE events, consolidate the country's influence at the international level, and confirm its status among the world's leading countries in terms of conference and event organizations.

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