



**The Impact of COVID – 19 Pandemic on Thailand’s MICE Industry and the Adaptive
Strategies**



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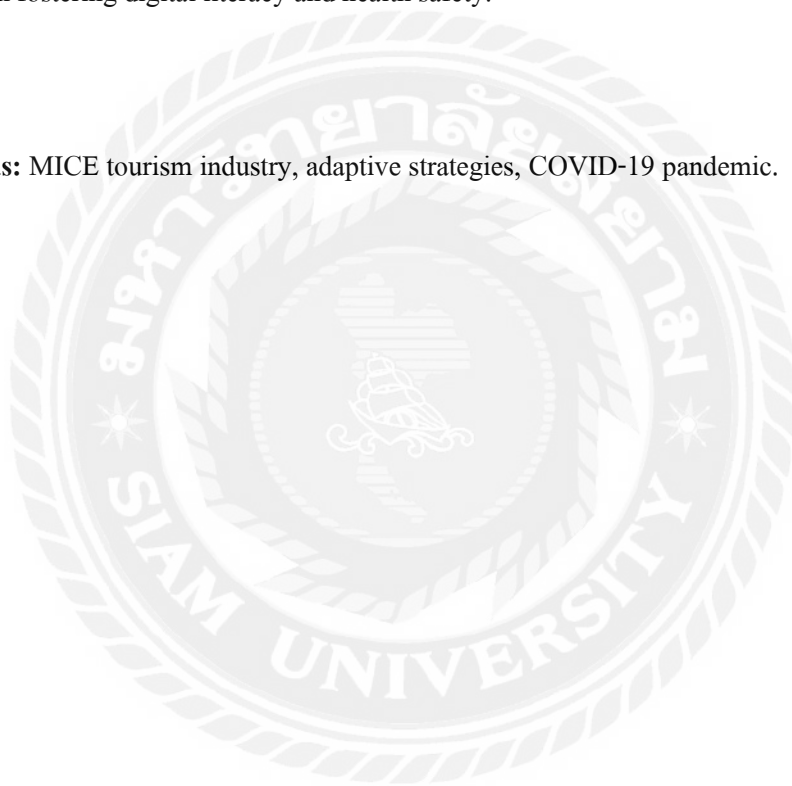
Abstract

This research paper provides an overview of the economic impact on Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism cluster of Thailand after the spread of the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). Thailand, renowned as a leading tourist destination in Southeast Asia due to its rich culture, traditions, and diverse tourism offerings, significantly benefited from MICE tourism before the COVID-19 pandemic. This sector has been crucial to the country's economy, providing job opportunities and supporting various related industries. However, the pandemic brought travel restrictions, health and safety concerns, financial losses, and numerous challenges to the tourism sector, particularly impacting human resources and the tourism cluster.

This study was documentary research, analyzing information available in academic journals, books, articles, magazines, websites, market research, and statistical resources. This research aimed to assess the pandemic's effects on numerous aspects of Thailand’s MICE industry, explore strategies to address the challenges arising from these impacts and identify emerging trends in the “new normal” context with internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, the research aimed to examine the adaptive strategies implemented by MICE organizations and possible strategies to be applied to overcome unexpected situations such as the COVID-19 crisis. The findings highlighted the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on Thailand's MICE tourism sector, examining industry overview, government support, economic effects, and technological advancements. Emphasizing the critical role of information technologies (IT), the research highlighted how IT integration enhances service standards, reduces operational costs, and provides a competitive edge.

The adoption of hybrid event formats, combining virtual and live components, emerges as a pivotal response to pandemic-induced disruptions. Government initiatives supporting MICE capability development, establishing regional business centers, and promoting data analytics and wellness tourism underscore Thailand's commitment to resilience and innovation. The study recommends strategic diversification, health and safety protocols, and skill enhancement programs to navigate challenges and ensure recovery. Projects like the Virtual Meeting Space (VMS) and health safety initiatives demonstrate the proactive stance of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) in fostering digital literacy and health safety.

Keywords: MICE tourism industry, adaptive strategies, COVID-19 pandemic.

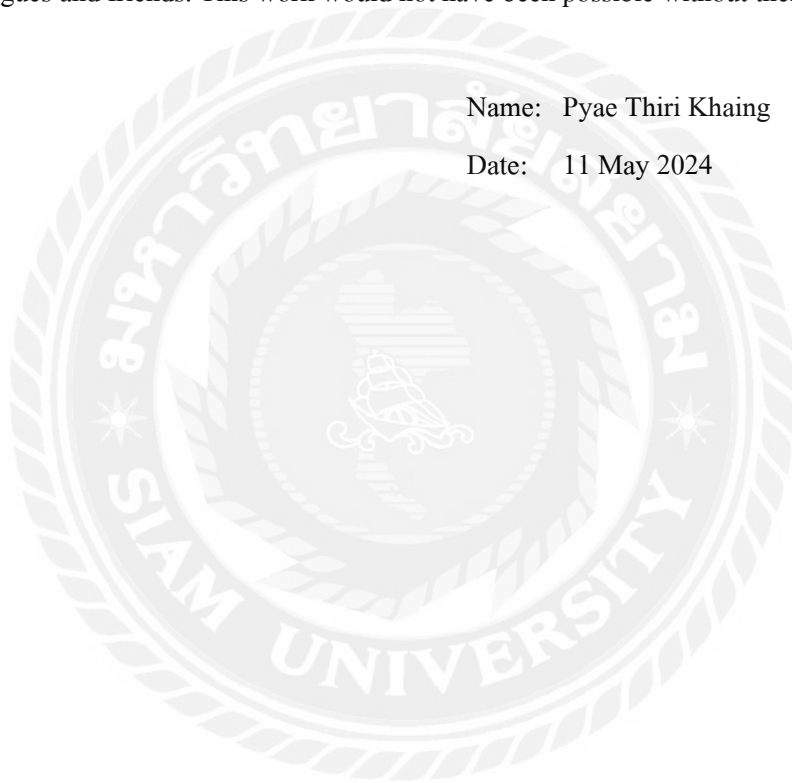


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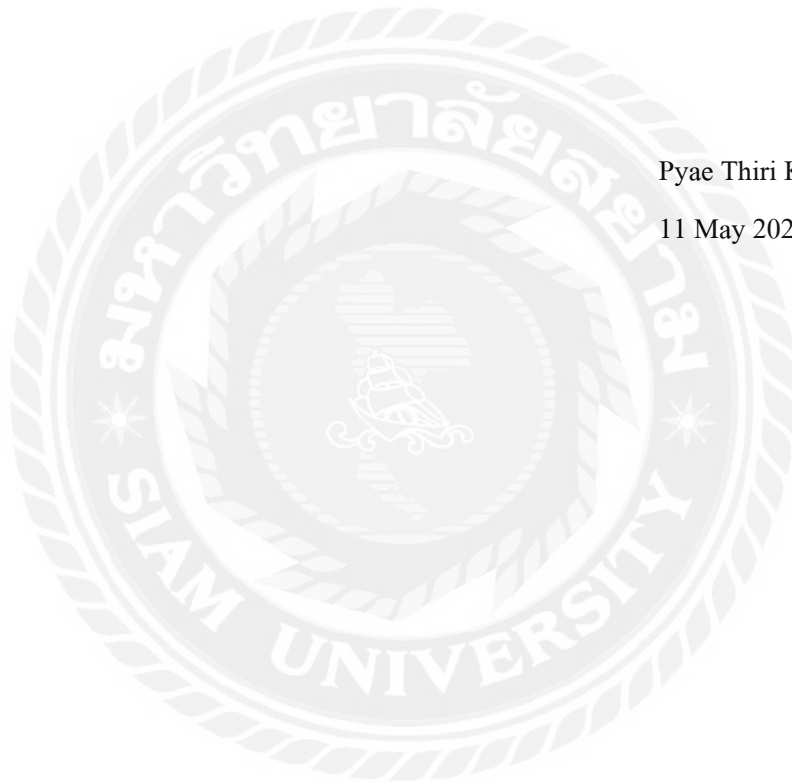


Declaration

I, Pyae Thiri Khaing, hereby certify that the work embodied in this independent study entitled “The Impact of COVID–19 Pandemic on Thailand’s MICE Industry and the Adaptive Strategies” is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Pyae Thiri Khaing

11 May 2024



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Thailand is well-known for its vibrant tourism industry, which attracts millions of travelers each year. Thailand's tourism industry receives substantial support as an economic contributor to the country's GDP and in response to the diverse motivations propelling people to traverse its alluring landscapes, the travel industry has deftly evolved, adapting to the multifaceted needs. People travel for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, so the travel industry must adapt to their demands. Various types of tourism have arisen, including medical tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, leisure tourism, and even birth tourism (Anjana, 2023).

In Thailand, the government has set forth the fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan for continuous tourism promotion and tourism has become the most important source of foreign exchange. Therefore, the tourism industry has driven the national economy and growth, leading to employment, job creation, income distribution, and investment in many related activities (Yaowaluk & Chaloeapol, 2018).

Within the spectrum of diverse tourism offerings in Thailand, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism emerges as a pivotal contributor to the nation's economic and tourism sectors. The substantial impacts of MICE tourism have proven instrumental in propelling both economic development and overall growth at the national level, eliciting heightened international interest. This phenomenon not only facilitates the creation of employment opportunities but also fosters the establishment and consolidation of business networks, encourages strategic investments, and contributes significantly to the equitable distribution of income, thereby underscoring the multifaceted and integral role played by MICE tourism in Thailand's socio-economic landscape. The number of MICE travelers has been growing steadily rising from 679,585 in 2010 to 1.28 million individuals in 2017. MICE revenue double increased from US\$ 1.45 billion in 2010 to US\$ 3.1 billion in 2017 (Erkinjon & Made Wiryanna, 2023).

According to the Tourism & Travel Competitiveness Index 2017, published by the World Economic Forum, Thailand ranks 34th out of 136 countries worldwide and 3rd among ASEAN countries, following Singapore and Malaysia (Chubchuwong, 2019). Thailand's MICE has risen to

Asia's no. 4 behind Japan, China, and Korea for international conventions but ranked No.1 among ASEAN countries. Thailand MICE has continually grown in terms of volume and revenue. The number of domestic and foreign MICE travelers totaling 8 million has contributed to the rise of total revenue by 6.27% or 50 billion baht in value. The stability reflects the popularity and confidence in Thailand as the region's leading MICE destination (TCEB, International Conventions, 2019).

The Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) is considered business tourism (MICE) that generates enormous amounts of revenues each year and contributes to income distribution to other tourism-associated businesses, including the service business of hotels, resorts, transportation services, restaurants, design services, and exhibition space decoration (Yaowaluk, & Chaloeapol, 2018).

On a local level, MICE activities can increase investments in local tourism infrastructure and generate revenue for the local economy. Especially in the off-season, MICE events assist small businesses in sharing benefits with professionals like photographers or florists. Furthermore, MICE events promote the country on an international scale as the country organizes meetings and other activities tailored for international travelers (Rwigema, P.C, 2020).

The economic effects of business tourism are measurable, both financially and naturally – expressed by number and quantity. In 2018, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has a projected 1.34 million international MICE travelers to Thailand, which will contribute revenue of US\$ 3.4 billion. According to the 2021 International Convention Destination Competitive Index surveyed by Gaining Edge, a world-leading consulting company in the MICE industry, Thailand's capital, Bangkok, was ranked 6th place in International Convention Destination from 101 cities in the world. This was the potential to increase market share and generate huge revenue for the country in the future, resulting in a more flourishing Thai tourism business.

In addition, the global or regional conferences have produced a unique image of Thailand as a destination for one of the best international and ASEAN regional conventions with the involvement of private and public sector organizations. However, this prediction was based on the historical performance of the industry which excluded any possibility of a reversal due to a global pandemic (COVID-19) changed the MICE landscape. Since travel and MICE are inextricably linked, it is apparent that "tourism can contribute to the spread of disease" (Gössling, & Hall, 2020).

1.2 Problem of the Study

According to TCEB announcements, during the 2018 fiscal year, Thailand was expected to welcome 30.1 million MICE travelers, generating MICE revenue of up to 174 billion baht. Of this total, 1.192 million MICE travelers were expected to account for 112-billion-baht MICE revenue, and 29 million domestic MICE travelers would add 62 billion baht of MICE revenue to the country's economy (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2018). The emergence of COVID-19 inflicted a dramatic decline in Thailand's tourism industry, causing a notable 5.65% decline in GDP in the first quarter of 2020 (Zhicheng, 2023).

Global business operations and travel behavior have rapidly changed by the outbreak of Covid-19. The epidemic caused hundreds of events canceled all over the world, and people started to make cancellations or postponements resulting in the closure of numerous business operations. The revenue of Thailand's Domestic MICE decreased by 63.8% to 40.8 million THB significantly from April to June 2021, whereas income from domestic exhibitions was 26 million baht, which declined 74.7 percent year-on-year. Many business operators closed, laid off employees, or halted operations as a result of the epidemic (Phuket Event Company, n.d).

The rapid transmission of the COVID-19 virus has not only precipitated a widespread public health crisis but has also instigated massive and far-reaching shutdowns of business activities, sending shockwaves across all economic sectors on a global scale. This unprecedented disruption has been particularly evident in the decline of MICE tourism, a sector heavily reliant on seamless collaboration among stakeholders, which has been adversely impacted by strict travel restrictions, rigorous border controls, and mandatory quarantines. This caused meeting and convention organizers, who were unable to guarantee the safety of participants, to decide either to cancel, postpone, or relocate their events. (Disimulacion, 2020).

1.3 Objective of the Study

This research aims to analyze the impacts of COVID–19 on Thailand’s Meetings, Incentive Travel, Inventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) and the solutions to the challenges and new normal trends by Thailand’s public and private stakeholders. The main objectives of the study are the following;

1. To analyze the challenges that Thailand’s MICE industry faced due to the crisis of COVID-19 pandemic
2. To explore the adaptive strategies adopted by the MICE Industry in the post-pandemic period
3. To propose strategies to overcome an unforeseen crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic

1.4 Significance of the Study

The focus of the research is Thailand’s MICE tourism industry, with a focus on the challenges faced by the crisis of COVID- 19 pandemic era and the adaptive strategies which may assist to overcome other upcoming crisis for Tourism and economic industry. All stakeholders of the MICE tourism sector need to overcome the same situation of unexpected situations like this pandemic in positive ways. As the market is growing stronger and stronger and more competitive, this study will provide the strategies of New Normal for how to survive and revive in a post-COVID-19 world with the information and communications to continue producing business events. Therefore, the study will seek to recommend areas of further research to help pivot MICE through the use of ICT and other event technologies in a post-COVID-19 environment.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the impact of the pandemic on the economy of MICE tourism in the whole country of Thailand, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to Thailand’s MICE industry, and how to handle the challenges with a suitable strategy. This paper was documentary research based on the secondary data of various scholars from journals, magazines, books, newspapers, etc., and other relevant research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature overview highlights the significance MICE tourism sector in Thailand. MICE tourism of Thailand has opened various business opportunities for both the government and the stakeholders of the related industries. MICE tourism, encompassing Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions, represents a crucial aspect of the tourism industry that generates significant economic benefits and fosters both direct and indirect employment. Government support and regulatory frameworks play a significant role in driving this specialized cluster's growth trajectory, and strategic considerations in the face of obstacles and competition become essential for long-term growth. Additionally, studies in this area provide invaluable insights that facilitate the development of adaptive strategies to reduce revenue losses caused by seasonal fluctuations, uncertainty, and, most notably, the unprecedented disruptions brought about to MICE tourism.

2.1 Introduction to MICE Industry

Thailand has cultivated a multifaceted image as a destination encompassing a diverse array of leisure and business attractions, characterized by its reputation for offering excellent value for money, the inherent friendliness of its people, convenient accessibility, the presence of well-equipped and standard venues, and perceived overall safety. Moreover, the country's rich cultural heritage, culinary delights, and scenic landscapes contribute to its appeal, and continuous efforts to implement sustainable tourism practices highlight a commitment to preserving its natural and cultural assets, enhancing its appeal to a global audience seeking both enriching experiences and responsible travel options. (Jurakanit & Taweepornpatomkul, 2019).

In Thailand's tourism market, business tourism is generally called MICE which stands for Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, Exhibitions, and Events. MICE tourism is a mode of the tourism industry that contributes to economic benefits and both direct and indirect employment. Key stakeholders involved in the MICE industry include corporations, associations, professional conferences, and exhibitions organizers, venues, and various supporting organizations (Dupilak, 2022).

According to the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCO), Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism, represents a specialized sector within the broader tourism industry that is characterized by the strategic planning and organization of various gatherings, events, and conferences aimed at facilitating professional, educational, and commercial interactions. MICE is defined as below:

Meetings

Meetings are a generic term that refers to the coming together of people in a particular place to discuss, confer, or participate in a specific activity. Meetings can range in frequency from ad hoc gatherings to regular events like committee meetings, annual general meetings, and so on.

Incentive Travel

Incentive travel refers to a meeting event that is strategically integrated into a program and provides a rewarding incentive to participants for their performance, giving corporate engagements a motivational element. Incentive travel aims to reward individuals for their great performance, improve team spirit, or strengthen employee loyalty.

Conferences

Conferences are interactive gatherings that are carefully planned to facilitate discussions, fact-finding endeavors, problem-solving initiatives, and consultations, creating an environment that is favorable to the exchange of ideas and knowledge dissemination.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions are dynamic events wherein products and services are the main attraction by providing a platform for businesses and industries to showcase their offerings, innovations, and expertise, thereby creating a valuable hub for networking, business development, and showcasing advancements in various sectors.

According to Chubchuwong (2019), there are two main organizations responsible for the promotion of MICE tourism in Thailand. The first one is the Thailand Convention and Exhibition

Bureau (TCEB), which is a public organization responsible for promoting and developing business events in Thailand. The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), a public entity entrusted with the responsibility of not only promoting but also meticulously developing business events within the country. Tasked with fostering a conducive environment for the growth of the MICE sector, TCEB plays a key role in positioning Thailand as a premier destination for international conferences, meetings, and exhibitions.

The other one is the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA), an association of private-sector businesses involved in promoting all services related to the MICE industry. As a collaborative force, these organizations contribute significantly to the strategic positioning and sustained growth of Thailand as an established MICE destination.

Four main channels are typically used to organize international MICE groups by reserving accommodation and need to contact MICE organizers in their home countries or local tour operators, and implementing specific business targets, high purchasing power especially on quality products and services of the host country.

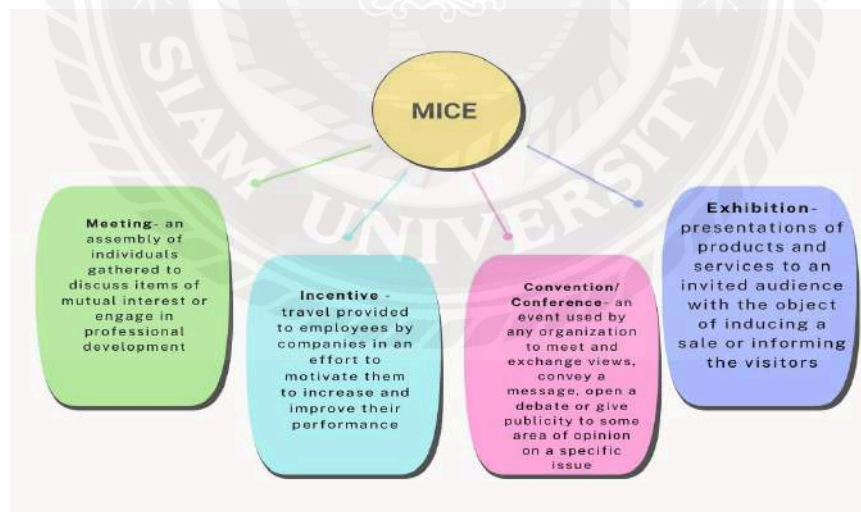


Figure 1: MICE Components

Source: Tetiana Dupliak's research, THE MICE TOURISM INDUSTRY TRENDS

Firstly, the process involves the reservation of accommodations, necessitating direct communication with MICE organizers in the participants' home countries or engagement with local tour operators. This elaborate network facilitates the intricate planning and logistical arrangements required for hosting successful business events. Secondly, the implementation of specific business targets comes into focus, aligning the objectives of the MICE group with the offerings and capabilities of the host country. Thirdly, the high purchasing power of MICE participants, particularly concerning the acquisition of quality products and services, becomes a noteworthy aspect, underscoring the economic significance of MICE tourism to the host destination. In essence, the concerted efforts of organizations like TCEB and TICA, coupled with effective channels for international coordination, propel Thailand's standing as a dynamic and competitive player in the global MICE tourism landscape.

Thailand has proactively made substantial efforts to not only establish its position as a popular tourist destination but also to emerge as a leading Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) hub within Southeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region. This strategic initiative involves the development and enhancement of innovative convention centers, conference facilities, and accommodation options that meet international standards, aiming to cater to the evolving needs of the MICE industry.

The country's commitment to promoting business events is evident in its implementation of supportive policies, incentives, and infrastructure projects designed to facilitate the seamless execution of conferences, exhibitions, and corporate gatherings, further augmenting Thailand's appeal as a premier choice for MICE-related activities in the dynamic and competitive regional landscape. According to Deery et al., (2010), the role of MICE tourism is to enhance business performance with a focus on supporting innovation. Building on the significance of the MICE sector, Bartis et al. (2021) highlight that events serve as crucial platforms for trade and fostering interactions among business performances.

2.2 Diamond Analysis Model

This Diamond Analysis provides a comprehensive framework to assess the various factors influencing the MICE tourism industry in Thailand amidst the pandemic. By analyzing demand conditions, factor conditions, related and supporting industries, firm strategy and rivalry, and the role of government and chance, this model highlights the multifaceted challenges and opportunities for the industry. The insights derived from this research can guide stakeholders in developing effective strategies to revive and sustain the MICE tourism sector in a post-COVID-19 world.

Firm Strategy, Structure, and Rivalry

The strategies employed by MICE tourism firms to navigate the pandemic have included cost-cutting measures, diversification of services, and a significant shift towards digital transformation. The competitive landscape of MICE tourism in Thailand has been reshaped as firms position themselves for post-pandemic recovery, focusing on innovation and resilience. Government support and policies have played a crucial role in aiding the sector's recovery, providing financial assistance and establishing regulations to facilitate a safe and sustainable resurgence of MICE tourism.

Factor Input Conditions

Evaluating the existing infrastructure for MICE tourism in Thailand involves examining venues, transportation systems, and technological capabilities. The pandemic has significantly impacted employment in the MICE sector, highlighting the urgent need for reskilling and upskilling the workforce. Additionally, Thailand's natural attractions and cultural heritage remain key assets for MICE tourism, offering unique experiences that enhance the country's appeal as a premier destination.

Demand Conditions

The pandemic has significantly impacted global travel demand, including MICE tourism, leading to a substantial decline in both international and domestic MICE activities. Analyzing this decline reveals the extent of the disruption. Looking ahead, post-pandemic recovery trends indicate a growing interest in hybrid events that combine physical and virtual attendance. Additionally,

consumer preferences have shifted, with increased emphasis on safety, flexibility, and the integration of virtual components in MICE tourism.

Chance

An analysis of government interventions reveals the financial aid and policies implemented to support the MICE industry during and after the pandemic. New health and safety regulations have significantly impacted MICE tourism, leading to the standardization of protocols to ensure safety and compliance. Additionally, the role of unpredictable events like the COVID-19 pandemic has been pivotal in shaping industry dynamics and responses, highlighting the need for adaptability and resilience in the face of such challenges.

Related Support Industries

The interdependence between MICE tourism and the hospitality sector, including hotels, restaurants, and entertainment, is crucial for the industry's success. ICT and event technology providers play a vital role in facilitating virtual and hybrid events, ensuring seamless connectivity and engagement. Travel agencies have also been significantly impacted, necessitating their adaptation to changing market conditions to remain viable and competitive in the evolving landscape of MICE tourism.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This documentary research, spanning from May to August 2023, aimed to analyze the impacts of COVID-19 on Thailand's Meetings, Incentive Travel, Inventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry and the adaptive strategies to the challenges and new normal trends by Thailand's public and private sector stakeholders. The documentary research involves analyzing existing documents and materials to gather information and insights on a particular topic or issue.

This research is a cross-sectional and longitudinal study. The cross-sectional aspect involved analyzing the current impacts of COVID-19 on Thailand's MICE (Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, and Exhibitions) industry, while the longitudinal aspect involved collecting data spanning from 2009 to 2023 to provide a comprehensive understanding of trends and changes over time. The study aimed to examine both the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic and the long-term trends and solutions adopted by stakeholders in response to the evolving situation.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection for this study involved gathering information from various sources including Google, EBSCO, Academia.edu, and other relevant platforms. The research focused on keywords associated with the analysis of COVID-19 impacts on Thailand's MICE industry and the responses of public and private sector stakeholders. Additionally, data spanning from 2009 to 2023 were collected to ensure the inclusion of up-to-date and detailed information for analysis. Ethical considerations were taken into account, including proper citation practices throughout the research process.

3.3 Diamond Analysis Model Used in Analysis

The theoretical framework employed in the analysis is Porter's Diamond Analysis model, which helps interpret economic factors affecting MICE Tourism in Thailand. The Diamond Analysis model involves assessing various economic indicators and factors which include demand, competition, infrastructure, and government policies to understand the dynamics of the MICE

tourism industry. The analysis involves qualitative and quantitative techniques to evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 and the effectiveness of the adaptive strategies implemented.

Table 1 Documentary Research Analysis of Thailand’s MICE Tourism Cluster

Keywords	Influencing Factors	Findings/ Sources/ References
Firm Strategy and Rivalry	Strategy	Somsawat, S., & Tananpang, C. (2020)
		TCEB (2019) Brighter Future of Meeting events in Thai by TCEB.
		TCEB, (2022) TCEB unveils 3 Main Strategies at “Thai MICE for the Nation Article, 2022
Factor (Input) Conditions	Input Conditions	Nopparat B & Busarin W. (2019)
	MICE Destination	Nayak, P. (2022) Janrapee Kemthong. (2023)
	Ease of Access	TICA, Ease of Access article Bongkosh R, Eric L, Rengson M. (2020)
Demand Conditions	Safety and Security	Eric laws et al., 2020
	MICE Tourist Demand	WTTC economic impact research. (2018)
	Internationally Recognized Tourist Destinations	Kantapop Buathong & Pei Chun Lai. (2017)
	MICE Cities	Sirinkaanta Pongprasert. (2019)
	International Exhibitions Hub	Kai Hattendorf. (2022) TCEB, e-library. (2020)
Chance	Employment Opportunities	TCEB, strategy of MICE capability development. (2022) Bright Future of Meetings and Events in Thailand by TCEB. (2019)

Chance	Technology Advancement	W. Dilshan. (2020) 10 Tech Trends in Thailand Startup (2020-21) TCEB's 3 strategies on innovation & technology for MICE industry. (2023)
Government	Government Organizations	Janrapee Kemthong. (2023)
	Industry Players	Chaloempol Somkietikul. (2018)
	MICE Wi-innovation project	Blauw, T. N. (2023)
Other Influencing Factors	Information Technology	Soltanifar, M. (2021) MICE Intelligence Team. (2023)
	Wellness and MICE	Global Wellness Institute. (2023) TCEB. (2021)

Chapter 4

Findings

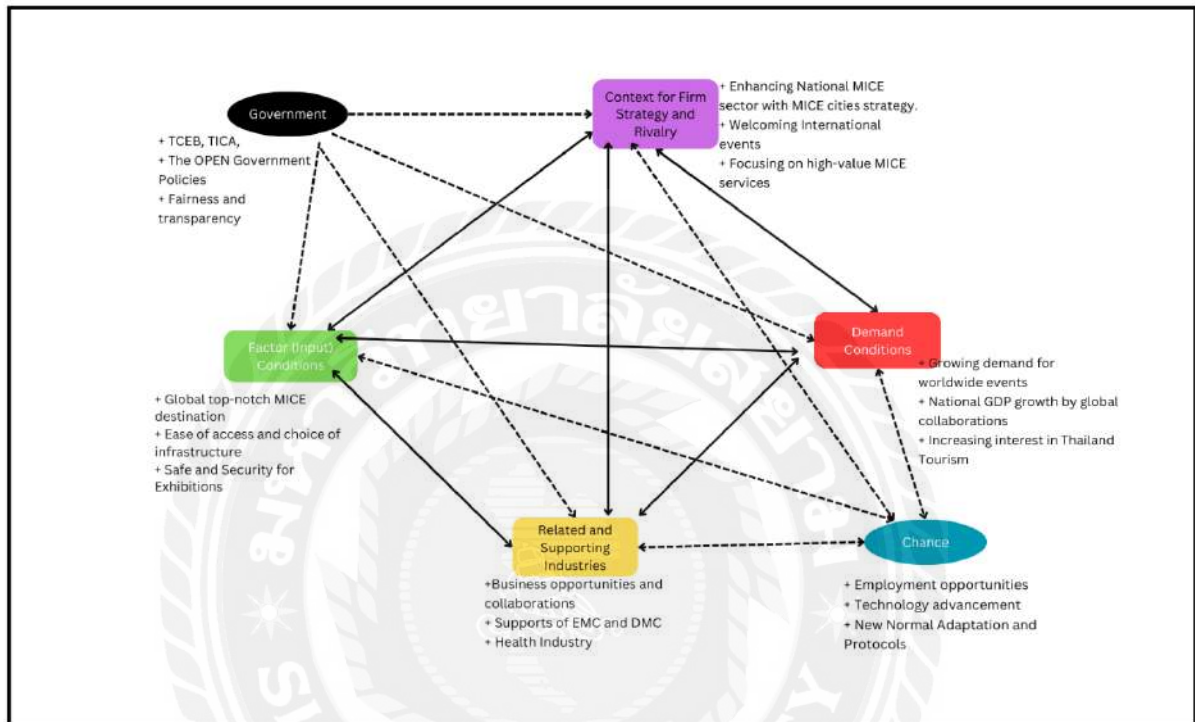


Figure 2 Diamond Analysis of MICE Tourism Cluster in Thailand

This study identified the decline in MICE tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a significant economic decline, disrupting MICE activities, and leading to event cancellations and financial losses.

This study delved into the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on MICE tourism in Thailand, covering industry overview, government support, economic impact, and technological advancement. After analyzing the current practices and trends embraced by the industry in adapting to the post-pandemic environment, this study formulated proactive strategies ensuring readiness for unforeseen crises, including the potential recurrence of a pandemic, aiming to offer valuable insights that contribute to the resilience and future preparedness of the MICE sector in Thailand.

From the Diamond Analysis, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on MICE tourism cluster are as follows:

4.1 Firm Strategy and Rivalry

Thailand's MICE tourism strategy aims to position the country as a leading destination for international conferences, exhibitions, and corporate events. The MICE industry which is considered the most significant economic machine in Thailand capable of creating an industrial value of above a hundred thousand million baht per year.

In the preceding period of the COVID-19 outbreak, the MICE industry has yielded the lowest revenue in the last 10 years. The businesses could not be conducted due to the contradiction to the social distancing measure, causing the income to rapidly decrease by more than 60 percent (Somsawat, & Tananpang, 2020).

The 2022 strategy of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), as stated by the president of TCEB, focuses on three pillars: strengthening the national MICE industry by upgrading cities for MICE, creating new events, and assisting event organizers to meet international standards for economic growth based on regional advantages; and partnering with professional associations to prepare for the return of international MICE events.

Firstly, there is a dedicated emphasis on fortifying the national Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry through the enhancement of cities as prime MICE destinations. This involves strategic urban development initiatives aimed at creating infrastructural environments conducive to hosting a diverse range of business events, thereby enhancing the overall appeal of Thailand as a premier MICE destination. Secondly, the strategy entails fostering innovation and diversity within the MICE landscape, while concurrently providing support to event organizers in aligning with international standards. This multifaceted approach is envisioned as a catalyst for economic growth, leveraging regional advantages to position Thailand as a dynamic hub for MICE activities.

The plan also aims to attract more international events, and the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) has a policy to promote MICE as an economic driver in different regions with specific positioning based on their potential and foundation (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2022). This endorsement is underscored

by a legislative framework that positions MICE activities strategically, capitalizing on the unique potential and foundational strengths of different regions. This comprehensive approach, integrating both national and regional perspectives, highlights Thailand's concerted efforts to leverage the MICE sector as a catalyst for economic development and international engagement in the dynamic landscape of worldwide business events.

According to TCEB announcement, they are now following the five-year action plan (2023-2027) under the TCEB Go strategy and Thailand MICE to Meet You year 2023 to support and advance the MICE sector and that aims to attract over 160 million MICE travelers and earn more than 945 billion baht. (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2023).

According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Thailand is ranked as the fifth most popular meeting venue in Asia and hosted 193 large events in 2018, ahead of other destinations like India, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Even though Bangkok remains the top choice for large events, Chaing Mai and Pattaya hosted several large events in 2018 (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2018).

4.2 Factor Input Conditions

The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry stands prominently on the global stage, garnering widespread recognition from governments across numerous countries. Acknowledged as a pivotal component of the broader tourism sector, the MICE industry has not only demonstrated consistent growth but has also evolved into a crucial contributor to revenue generation and employment opportunities. Global governments have increasingly come to appreciate the economic impact and multifaceted benefits that the MICE sector brings to their respective nations. MICE tourists have specific business targets, significant spending capacity, and a demand for quality products and services including flights, accommodation, logistics and domestic travel, etc. (Akapol, 2009).

MICE Destination

Thailand is highly recognized as a top-notch MICE destination with potential opportunities for business growth in different sectors with its various travel-related offerings. Its strategic location in Southeast Asia and diverse economy further enhance its potential as a thriving hub for business events and the MICE industry. The presence of the government-sanctioned TCEB demonstrates the country's commitment to excellence in MICE (Nayak, 2022).

MICE tourists are labeled as high-quality customers according to their expenses are double or triple of other tourist groups. The MICE industry generated 559.84 billion Thai baht or 3.27% of GDP in 2019, half of this amount came from a domestic MICE of around 279.33 billion Thai baht (Kemthong, 2023).

Moreover, Thailand's appeal as a MICE destination is enhanced by its rich cultural heritage, world-class infrastructure, and a wide range of venues that can accommodate a variety of events, from international conferences and exhibitions to business meetings. The country's commitment to sustainability and innovation in the MICE sector attracts discerning business travelers seeking not only a conducive environment for professional engagements but also an immersive and enriching cultural experience.

Ease of Access

Due to its destination image, the exhibition facilities in Thailand showed no significant differences between the three MICE stakeholders or the MICE demand side and MICE supply side. Thailand as a destination with its ever-increasing MICE industry relies on easy access for delegates who have been invited to attend from all over the world. (Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (n.d).

Thailand places a strategic emphasis on ensuring easy accessibility for delegates hailing from diverse corners of the globe, recognizing the pivotal role this plays in fostering international participation and solidifying the country's standing in the global MICE arena. Significantly, a majority of Thailand's meeting facilities not only meet but often exceed international standards, showcasing innovative infrastructure and amenities that cater to the multifaceted needs of discerning global stakeholders. Most of the meeting facilities of Thailand match international standards. More

importantly, the MICE stakeholders perceived that the meeting facilities also include friendly and professional personnel of the venues in enhancing guest satisfaction (Bongkosh R et al, 2020).

Safe and Security

Thailand emerges as a distinctive gem within the ASEAN region, earning a reputation for its enhanced safety compared to other destinations in the same group. Thailand was considered safer than other ASEAN destinations, with fewer criminal issues like pickpocketing and robberies. However, first-time convention owners and organizers were concerned about the perceived value for money, which is a resilient attribute despite crises. Compared to other destinations, Thailand is positioned as a destination that provides quality services at reasonable prices, with its affordable tourist attractions for leisure (Business- leisure).

During COVID-19 in May 2020, while many upscale hotels temporarily closed, some hotels opened 30–40 rooms for extended–stay individual guests who did not want to travel back to their country because they perceived Thailand safer in combating COVID-19 (Eric Laws et al., 2020). Thailand's commitment to not only prioritizing the safety of its visitors but also showcasing flexibility and resilience in adapting to evolving circumstances, further solidifying its standing as a preferred destination for both business and leisure travelers seeking a harmonious blend of safety, affordability, and quality services.

4.3 Demand Conditions

Thailand's MICE tourism is supported by various sectors and industries which play a crucial role in providing critical services and infrastructure for successful MICE events. The success of Thailand's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism is intricately woven into the fabric of the nation's various sectors and industries, each playing a pivotal and indispensable role in providing essential services and infrastructure required for the seamless execution of successful MICE events, highlighting the collaborative synergy that contributes to the vibrancy of the MICE tourism landscape in the country.

The overall economic and corporate climate has a substantial impact on MICE tourist demand, based on the World Travel & Tourism Council report, MICE tourism plays an important

role in the overall Thailand economy (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). Thailand's stable economic conditions, corporate growth, and investment opportunities attract more business travelers and corporations to attend meetings, conferences, and events in the country.

According to the TCEB announcement, the economic impact in 2017 (GDP contribution) was 177 billion baht which is around 1.2% of the whole country's GDP. The MICE GDP contribution has significantly risen to 550.2 billion in 2019, which is around 3.27% of the country's GDP. (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2022)

Thailand which is already an internationally recognized tourist destination, has been transforming into a progressively favored choice for hosting global events, encompassing product marketing campaigns, and corporate seminars (Kantapop, & Lai, 2017). TCEB has designated Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Pattaya, and Phuket as MICE Cities capable of hosting important business events (Sirinkaanta, & Sombat, 2019).

Thailand's global profile as a hub for international exhibitions has grown significantly in recent years and the market is well-positioned for additional growth in the years to come, stated Kai Hattendorf, 2022. Particularly during global conventions, Thailand has the chance to establish and project a positive impression to audiences worldwide. Thai organizers can also gain recognition for their adeptness in managing such events professionally. Furthermore, visitors can experience the country's tourist attractions, ultimately boosting the overall tourism sector and national economy. (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2020)

Thailand can use international conventions to promote its capabilities, infrastructure, and hospitality on a worldwide scale. Such events draw a wide range of attendees, including business executives, government officials, and academics, providing an ideal opportunity to promote the country. Attendees of global conventions not only focus on the event itself but also seek opportunities to explore the host country.

Thailand's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and diverse tourist attractions can be showcased to visitors, encouraging them to extend their stay and explore the country beyond the convention venue. Global conventions significantly boost Thailand's economy by attracting visitors who spend on accommodation, transportation, dining, and local attractions. Exposure and positive experiences from attendees can sustain tourism, making Thailand a preferred tourist destination, thereby boosting the country's economy.

4.4 Related Supporting Industries

4.4.1 Business Opportunities in Hospitality Industry

MICE tourism can be seen as a significant source of income for hospitality industries. MICE tourism, characterized by Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions, stands as not only a pivotal driver of economic growth but also a substantial source of income for the hospitality industries, encompassing hotels, conference centers, event venues, and related services, where the influx of business travelers and event attendees contributes significantly to room bookings, catering services, and various accommodations, thereby fostering the economic sustainability and prosperity of the hospitality sector through the lucrative opportunities presented by the dynamic landscape of MICE-related activities.

When exhibitors and attendees travel to attend events, they require accommodations, and hotels situated close to convention centers have a valuable opportunity to take advantage of this demand. Meeting facilities and hotel rooms close to convention centers are often fully booked during these events (Romashko, 2022).

The demand for accommodations during events extends beyond hotels to other local businesses, such as restaurants, transportation services, and retail outlets. This inflow of visitors stimulates economic activity in the surrounding areas, creating opportunities for small businesses to thrive.

MICE guests spend 17.5% more than leisure guests. Business travelers participating in MICE events allocate more than 65% of their expenditures toward hotel accommodations and dining within the hotel. Approximately 15% of their expenses are directed to dining at restaurants outside the hotel, while around 10% is dedicated to shopping, and another 10% is used for local transportation expenses (Chloe Lau, 2016).

Following the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Bangkok, hotels are optimistic about gaining more bookings from tourists and the MICE sector. In the fourth quarter of 2022, MICE guests accounted for 40% of total guests higher than the 35% recorded in 2019 (Shoowong, 2022).

4.4.2 Event Management Companies and Destination Management Companies

Destination Management Companies (DMCs) play a crucial role in assisting event organizers in organizing events, and efficiently handling numerous tasks. Destination Management Companies (DMCs) serve as invaluable partners for event organizers by providing comprehensive event coordination services and well-organized experience for both organizers and attendees. They handle various aspects such as transportation requirements, hotel reservations, dining, and suggested activities, drawing on their extensive knowledge of the event location to offer the finest available options. (Maggie Lancashire et al., 2023)

One of the key strengths of DMCs lies in their local expertise. They have in-depth knowledge of the event location, including cultural differences, legal requirements, and logistical challenges. This expertise allows them to navigate potential obstacles and provide solutions customized to the specific needs of the event.

More than 47% of people have access to Internet jobs, in remote areas, and the emergence of blockchain development advanced robotics, and the Internet of Things presents a significant transformation in the future, not only revolutionizing traditional job markets but also shaping the landscape of industries, economies, and societal structures worldwide, as these innovations continue to redefine the nature of work, connectivity, and automation in the foreseeable future (DMCC, 2019)

4.5 Chance

4.5.1 Employment Opportunities

The senior Vice President of TCEB declared that TCEB accelerates the strategy of MICE capability development in the integration of collaborations through education networks for the development of regional MICE Business Centers to serve Thailand reopening. Their objectives are to drive regional MICE, distribute quality MICE workforce and raise a competitive advantage of MICE in all regions across Thailand (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2022). The widespread dissemination of an exceptional level MICE workforce to meet industry demands, and the elevation of Thailand's competitive advantage in the MICE sector across all regions, showcasing a commitment to sustainable growth, innovation, and excellence in the country's MICE landscape.

In 2019, the MICE sector spent over USD 17.6 billion, which accounts for 3% of the GDP and \$1.130 billion in tax income. Additionally, the sector supports 340,595 employees, especially

in MICE-related sectors (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2019). These statistics highlight the MICE industry's multifaceted contributions, not only as a revenue-generating powerhouse but also as a significant source of employment and economic stability in Thailand. The sector's ability to stimulate GDP growth, generate tax revenue, and provide employment underscores its pivotal role in the nation's economic landscape.

4.5.2 Technology Advancement

The MICE industry is experiencing a significant increase in utilizing information technologies. As a result, numerous international MICE organizations are implementing those technologies to uphold service standards within the sector. Adopting technologies in MICE events can serve as a strategic tool for organizers to gain a competitive edge and reduce operating expenses which impact service standards in MICE tourism (W. Dilshan, 2020).

Due to technological advancements, many companies are reshaping their traditional office-based hierarchical structures. The introduction of advanced software allows for greater flexibility, enabling employees to work from anywhere, and promoting innovation and insights. Advanced technology encourages collaboration, makes it easier to form interest groups, and keeps all employees updated on the organization's latest improvements (10 Tech Trends in Thailand Startup For 2020-21).

According to TCEB's president, Mr. Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya stated that they are implementing a five-year action plan which is MICE Techno Mart 2023, to enhance Thai's MICE industry's competitiveness in the global market. They plan to draw a business-matching platform to use innovative products and technologies in addressing new and post-COVID-19 needs for the MICE industry (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2023).

This strategic plan aims to increase the competitiveness of Thailand's MICE industry on the international stage. The main focus of MICE Techno Mart 2023 is the establishment of an innovative business-matching platform, designed to leverage cutting-edge products and technologies. This platform is envisioned as a dynamic solution to address the evolving needs of the MICE industry, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing TCEB's forward-thinking approach in adopting technological advancements to enhance the resilience, adaptability, and overall appeal of Thailand's MICE sector in the global marketplace.

4.6 Government

The MICE tourism sector in Thailand has been prioritized by government organizations over the past few decades. Entities such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the International Convention Division, and the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA) were founded to closely coordinate between the government and business sectors of the MICE industry. The Thai government established the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) in 2002 (Kemthong, 2023).

There are two types of industry players in Thailand's MICE tourism, EOs and Vendors of EOs. Event Organizers (Eos) are Professional Conference Organizer (PCO), Professional Exhibition Organizer (PEO), and Destination Management Company (DMC). Hotels, venues, booth stand contractors and, logistics players are the vendors of EOs (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2018).

The strategy "MICE city" involves enhancing communication and marketing efforts targeting specific groups, establishing diverse tourism routes to integrate with MICE events, elevating the skills of personnel in the MICE sector to meet industry standards, upgrading accommodation options to meet MICE requirements, and developing infrastructure to facilitate MICE activities (Yaowaluk & Chaloeapol, 2018).

According to the TCEB president, Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya interview, the MICE wi-innovation project intends to establish a platform where event organizers and venue operators can collaborate with Tech entrepreneurs to offer safe and hygienic events by utilizing their innovative technology products or services (Travel Trade Journal, 2022).

TCEB is restructuring its domestic MICE strategy to turn it into a key mechanism to help boost economic growth, create jobs, and distribute income across the country. Based on the concept "New MICE Perspectives – Uncover Your MICE Experience in Thailand," the government aims to create a network to expand market prospects and implement collaborative strategies for maximum success, outcomes (Blauw, T. N., 2023).



Figure 3. Interlinks in the MICE Industry

Source: TCEB, Study on the Economic Impact of MICE industry in Thailand.

4.7 Other Related Factors

4.7.1 Information Technology

The impact of digitalization is seen everywhere around the world. Digital technologies have changed operations in organizations and enabled far-reaching social and political changes. According to TCEB, Thailand CONNEX has evolved into a data-rich platform with continuous data flow, offering opportunities for value creation across various sectors.

This digital platform not only facilitates seamless connectivity but also catalyzes innovation, enabling stakeholders to harness the wealth of data for informed decision-making. As technology becomes increasingly intertwined with the fabric of society, platforms like Thailand CONNEX play a pivotal role in fostering collaboration, driving economic growth, and navigating the complexities of our data-driven world. The commitment to leveraging digital capabilities reflects a forward-thinking approach, positioning Thailand at the forefront of the global digital revolution.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teeranee emphasized the significance of data analytics in effective management, comparing it to flying a plane without sensors. Utilizing data from both the government and private sector is crucial for revitalizing Thailand's tourism industry. To achieve integration, a travel information service called "Travel Link" has been developed by another linking

center. This service aims to enhance the competitiveness of operators in the tourism industry. (MICE Intelligence Team, 2023)

Due to the dynamic landscape of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism sector, stakeholders need to increasingly recognize the imperative role of information technologies (IT) in elevating service standards, reducing operational costs, and gaining a competitive edge. The information-intensive nature of the tourism industry, with its global influence, underscores the vital contribution of IT in efficiently managing diverse processes inherent to tourism.

Leveraging Information Technology (IT) can lead to operational efficiency, resulting in a notable enhancement in overall productivity within the tourism sector. One of the primary advantages lies in the realm of marketing and promotion, where effective utilization of IT enables stakeholders to digitally showcase and advertise tourism services. This not only facilitates reaching a broader audience but also significantly increases visibility in a digitally interconnected world. As MICE stakeholders leverage the capabilities of information technologies, they position themselves at the forefront of innovation, ready to reap the multifaceted benefits that technological integration offers in the highly competitive and rapidly evolving landscape of the MICE tourism industry.

The MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) sector in Thailand is experiencing a significant rise in the integration of cutting-edge technology, a trend that is actively encouraged and embraced by a considerable proportion of MICE organizers. The industry's openness to technological innovations is reflected in the current adoption rates, and there is a clear expressed intention among organizers to further incorporate advancements in technology. However, to successfully implement IT practices within the broader spectrum of tourism-related industries, a foundation of effective governance structures is a must to consider. These governance structures must align with the business objectives and strategies of the entities involved, thereby facilitating the seamless integration of IT into the core business processes. Such integration necessitates the allocation of adequate resources, encompassing both financial investments and stakeholder commitment.

Recognizing the critical role of skill enhancement, training initiatives emerge as a vital component in elevating the IT proficiency of industry stakeholders, ensuring that they are well-equipped to harness the benefits of technological advancements. Furthermore, promoting

collaboration and forming relationships with many stakeholders, including government agencies and technology suppliers, is critical for navigating the complexity of IT integration.

Government industries support through well-crafted policies, incentives, and financing mechanisms serves as a catalytic force, accelerating the effective adoption of robust IT governance practices across tourism-related industries. In summary, Thailand's MICE sector is evolving through a proactive embrace of technology, guided by strategic governance, industry-wide collaboration, and consistent government support.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic imposed severe restrictions on mass gatherings and disrupted travel, presenting unprecedented challenges for traditional MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism events. The complete rejection of live events during the epidemic had a significant detrimental impact on several economic aspects related to the MICE industry. To counteract this impact and restore the vibrancy of pre-pandemic eras, MICE events must now use a hybrid format that smoothly integrates virtual and live components.

The ongoing evolution of online technologies and the surging popularity of virtual events have led to a reevaluation of the relevance of traditional formats, especially in hosting exhibition events for business travelers. Recognizing the need for adaptation, and fostering collaboration among event organizers, venue operators, and tech entrepreneurs is critical. The collective effort should be focused on the implementation of innovative technology products and services that ensure the safety and hygiene of events in the post-COVID era. Through these collaborative initiatives and the infusion of cutting-edge technologies, the MICE sector can not only rebound from the challenges imposed by the pandemic but also emerge with renewed resilience and global relevance, paving the way for a future characterized by safe, dynamic, and hybrid MICE tourism experiences.

Hybrid events seamlessly merge the best features of virtual and live experiences, presenting a versatile and all-encompassing format that significantly enhances reach and accessibility. This unique approach allows participants to join from any corner of the globe, eliminating the requirement for physical presence and, consequently, reducing both travel costs and time constraints.

The fundamental adaptability of hybrid events extends to the convenience they afford attendees, who can participate in sessions and access content online, adjusting their involvement to individual preferences and engaging at a personalized pace. Nevertheless, the success of hybrid

events is not immune to challenges, with technical issues, including connectivity problems and the potential for variations in the experience between virtual and in-person participants, creating significant barriers.

Hybrid event execution requires thorough preparation and coordination to seamlessly integrate virtual and live components. Adequate resource allocation and cutting-edge technologies are critical to overcoming potential problems. Furthermore, the interactive nature of hybrid events fosters networking opportunities among participants, creating a global forum for knowledge exchange and collaboration. The integration of real-time audience engagement tools, such as live polls and Q&A sessions, adds an extra layer of interactivity, ensuring that both virtual and in-person attendees feel actively involved in the event. In essence, strategic planning and intelligent technology integration not only handle potential challenges but also elevate the overall impact and success of hybrid events in the contemporary landscape of inclusive and immersive experiences.

The active involvement of the government in Thailand's tourism sector is evident through its concerted efforts to maintain and strengthen support for the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry. These initiatives encompass a multifaceted approach, including the promotion of MICE capability development, the establishment of regional MICE business centers, and a commitment to facilitating the return of international MICE events. Notably, the MICE sector places a strong emphasis on data analytics for efficient management and informed decision-making.

The adoption of platforms like Thailand CONNEX is integral to ensuring a constant flow of data, fostering value creation and strategic insights. In alignment with the global shift towards wellness tourism, the government is proactively exploring the potential of medical and wellness tourism to attract visitors with a keen interest in health and well-being. This strategic diversification aligns with evolving travel preferences and positions Thailand as a holistic destination catering not only to business-related events but also to the growing desire for wellness-focused experiences.

The government's multifaceted approach demonstrates its commitment to guiding Thailand's tourism industry towards resilience, innovation, and alignment with emerging global trends, ensuring the country remains a competitive and sought-after destination in the evolving landscape of the tourism and MICE sectors. Thailand's status as a premier MICE destination is supported by its strategic advantages, government commitment, economic impact, and the

continuous evolution of its offerings, making it an ideal choice for businesses seeking a dynamic and rewarding environment to host impactful events and contribute to the growth of the MICE industry.

4.7.2 Wellness and MICE

Medical and Wellness Tourism is an activity where travelers are not only able to receive medical or wellness treatment but also can participate in activities or enjoy a trip to their destinations. Thailand is one of the top-ranked destinations for travelers who are interested in medication and wellness. (Global Wellness Institute, 2023)

The government continues to support and drive Thailand to become “The World’s Medical and Wellness Hub” to accommodate travelers from every corner of the world who visit Thailand for wellness while relaxing or engaging in activities. Under the government's "One Ministry One Expo" policy, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) collaborates with the Ministry of Public Health, specifically the Department of Service Support, along with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and Thai Health Promotion Foundation (Thai Health). Together, they are jointly organizing the "Thailand International Health Expo 2022." which takes place from 20th to 23rd January 2022 (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2021).

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study delve into the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on MICE tourism in Thailand, covering aspects such as industry overview, government support, economic impact, and technical advancement. The dynamic landscape of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism sector requires stakeholders to recognize the critical role of information technologies (IT) in elevating service standards, reducing operational costs, and obtaining a competitive edge. Leveraging IT leads to operational efficiency, enhancing productivity within the tourism sector, particularly in marketing and promotion efforts. The integration of cutting-edge technology in Thailand's MICE sector is actively encouraged, with a clear intention among organizers to further incorporate advancements in technology. Effective governance frameworks, skill enhancement through training initiatives, and engagement with government agencies and technology suppliers are critical for successful IT integration.

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed severe restrictions on mass gatherings, disrupting travel and traditional MICE tourism events. To counteract this impact, the adoption of hybrid event formats that integrate virtual and live components is essential. Hybrid events offer versatility, accessibility, and convenience, albeit facing challenges such as technical issues and variations in participant experiences. Government support is evident through initiatives aimed at promoting MICE capability development, establishing regional MICE business centers, and facilitating the return of international MICE events. The adoption of data analytics platforms and exploration of medical and wellness tourism further demonstrate the government's commitment to guiding Thailand's tourism industry towards resilience and innovation.

5.2 Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a substantial blow to Thailand's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry, resulting in huge revenue losses due to the large number of event cancellations and the installation of strict travel restrictions. This unprecedented disruption has created an environment of economic fluctuations and increased competition from rival destinations, introducing significant uncertainty into MICE markets. The pandemic-induced standstill in the MICE industry stands out as one of the most severe disruptions to the global economy since World War II.

In response to the major challenges, a strategic imperative emerges for the industry to adopt measures that can mitigate economic decline and foster resilience. Embracing diversification and innovation becomes paramount, with the exploration of novel approaches such as the implementation of hybrid events. By seamlessly combining in-person and virtual components, these events not only enhance their appeal but also overcome geographical boundaries, driving audience interest and encouraging global participation.

As events and exhibitions are reinstated, organizers must prioritize and implement resume local and international health and safety protocols. This commitment is essential not only for regulatory compliance but, more importantly, to build and maintain the trust of the audience. Looking ahead, the MICE industry's recovery will depend on its ability to navigate challenges through a combination of innovative strategies, diversified offerings, and unwavering dedication to health and safety measures, thus positioning itself for a resilient and adaptive future in the post-pandemic era.

To address this skill deficit, the government must aggressively strengthen specialized education and training programs, with a particular emphasis on developing industry-specific skills such as technology literacy and international language proficiency. Recognizing the urgency of this matter, the Senior Vice President of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has announced a strategic acceleration in MICE capability development. This initiative aims not only to enhance the quality of the MICE workforce but also to foster collaboration networks for the establishment of regional MICE business centers. The envisioned outcome is the creation of jobs and occupations that cater to the evolving demands of the MICE sector, catering to the needs of the new generation of MICE professionals nationwide.

In a bid to bridge the gap between demand and supply in the job market, TCEB has taken concrete steps by introducing the MICE Career Platform. This platform has proven successful, facilitating employment matching for over 1,000 jobs, as reported by The NATION of Industry News in 2022. Such initiatives underscore the commitment of both government and industry bodies in Thailand to address the skills shortage and elevate the MICE workforce, aligning with the evolving needs of the dynamic MICE business environment.

The authorities and stakeholders of Thailand's MICE tourism industry established the relevant strategies, options and to balance the priorities of upholding the health and safety of staff, sponsors, and attendees which is necessary to meet financial obligations and minimize the losses caused by disruption. (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020).

The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has unveiled two key projects aimed at accelerating digital-based MICE services and reinforcing health safety protocols within the industry. The first initiative, approximately named the "Virtual Meeting Space" (VMS) project, is designed to provide substantial support to MICE entrepreneurs in organizing online events while concurrently enhancing the virtual skills of the MICE workforce.

Within the framework of VMS, TCEB is set to support three distinct categories of virtual meetings: Webinars, O2O (Offline to Online), and E-learning Platforms. These categories provide a comprehensive approach to virtual engagement, ranging from educational platforms to seamlessly transitioning offline events to the digital realm. The second project, "Simple Ways to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Your Meetings and Events," is strategically aimed at MICE venue owners and operators. By targeting this segment, the project aims to strengthen health safety measures in response to the unique challenges posed by the global pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, ensuring the resilience of the MICE industry.

The initiatives demonstrate TCEB's commitment to fostering innovation, digital literacy, and health safety, positioning Thailand as a forward-thinking and adaptable destination for MICE events. As the industry continues to evolve, these projects play a pivotal role in equipping stakeholders with the necessary tools to navigate the dynamic landscape of digital MICE services while prioritizing health safety, thereby contributing to the sustained growth and competitiveness of Thailand's MICE sector.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Contribution to MICE Tourism

This study focuses on the intricate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on Thailand's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism sector. By emphasizing the critical role of IT integration, hybrid event formats, and government support in fostering resilience and innovation within the industry, the research enriches the understanding of the sector's response to unprecedented challenges.

5.3.2 Contributions to the Thai Economy

By recommending strategies to prevent economic decline and promote resilience in the MICE industry, this study contributes to sustaining Thailand's economy amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic. Furthermore, the study's implications extend beyond the MICE tourism sector, influencing related industries such as technology, education, and healthcare.

5.3.3 Contributions to Various Industries

By fostering collaboration and innovation across sectors, the recommendations provided in the study have the potential to drive broader economic growth and development. The study also sets a roadmap for future research endeavors.

5.3.4 Future Research Guideline

Future research could explore the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on Thailand's MICE tourism industry, assessing the effectiveness of implemented strategies, and identifying emerging trends in technology and event management. Additionally, the study encourages investigations into the integration of sustainability practices and the development of niche MICE markets, offering valuable insights for industry stakeholders seeking to navigate the evolving landscape of the tourism sector. In essence, the discussion and implications of this study underscore its significance in informing policy, guiding industry practices, and shaping the trajectory of Thailand's MICE tourism sector and related industries in the post-pandemic era.

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