



ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome

ISSN: 2351-0617 (print), ISSN: 2408-2058 (electronic)

A Study of User Behavior in Meetings and Seminars in Nakhon Si Thammarat: Development Guidelines under the Mice Industry

Thitima Rattanapong, Narinthon Imjai

ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome Vol 12(1) pp. 341-357

<http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/odijournal>

Published by the
Organization Development Institute
Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management
Assumption University Thailand

ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome
is indexed by the Thai Citation Index and ASEAN Citation Index

A Study of User Behavior in Meetings and Seminars in Nakhon Si Thammarat: Development Guidelines under the MICE Industry

Thitima Rattanapong¹, Narinthon Imjai²

¹Faculty of Management Science, Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University,
Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand. thitima_rat@nstru.ac.th

²Faculty of Management Science, Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University,
Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand. narinthon_imj@nstru.ac.th

Received: 15 July 2024. Revised: 17 August 2024. Accepted: 2 September 2024

Abstract

This research aims to explore the behavior and opinions of users attending meetings and seminars in Nakhon Si Thammarat, to propose development guidelines under the MICE industry. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In the quantitative phase, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 400 participants. The analysis indicated that the primary purposes for attending MICE activities were exhibitions/trade shows, organizational meetings/seminars, and professional conferences. Additionally, most participants attended with friends and used private vehicles for transportation. In the qualitative phase, focus group discussions were conducted with representatives from relevant agencies. Content analysis showed that key factors influencing the decision to attend included the attractiveness of the event, service standards, the venue, and support from both the government and private sectors. The findings of this research can be used to develop management strategies under the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat, enhancing its effectiveness in attracting target groups and promoting sustainable growth of the MICE industry in the region.

Keywords: Meeting and Seminar Management, MICE Industry, User Behavior

Introduction

The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry plays a crucial role in promoting the economy and tourism of Thailand. The MICE industry not only generates revenue for the country but also stimulates local development, job creation, and enhances international competitiveness (Somsawat & Tananpang, 2020). Additionally, the MICE industry has positive economic impacts in various dimensions, including employment, income distribution, and the promotion of investment in infrastructure and services, which are essential factors for sustainable economic growth (Wongmonta & Phorkha, 2018). Nakhon Si Thammarat is one of the provinces with high potential for MICE industry development due to its diverse natural and cultural resources, such as national parks, the Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan Temple, and beautiful beaches, which can attract tourists and businesspeople to organize MICE activities in the area. However, the development of the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat still faces several challenges, such as the lack of adequate infrastructure, insufficient collaboration among relevant agencies, and a lack of sufficient information on the behavior and needs of service users (Imjai & Sangthong, 2023). This study aims to explore the behavior and opinions of MICE service users in Nakhon Si Thammarat to propose practical development guidelines.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, comprising both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research utilizes structured questionnaires to collect data from a sample group of MICE participants in Nakhon Si Thammarat, providing an overview of the general behavior and needs of the service users (Senee, 2023). Concurrently, the qualitative research involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with representatives from relevant agencies, such as service business operators, event organizers, hotels, restaurants, and travel companies, helping to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing the decision to use the services and the challenges faced by operators in the MICE industry (Urwongse, 2019). The primary objectives of this study are twofold: first, to explore the behavior and opinions of MICE service users in Nakhon Si Thammarat, which will help to understand the needs and expectations of the service users in various aspects, such as the venue, accessibility, comfort, and services; second, to develop management guidelines that can enhance the competitiveness of the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat. The proposed guidelines will cover the development of infrastructure, fostering collaboration among relevant agencies, enhancing the skills and capabilities of personnel, and implementing effective marketing strategies. This study is significant in filling the existing information gaps and building a database for sustainable MICE industry development in Nakhon Si Thammarat. The research findings can be used for planning and implementing measures to promote and develop the MICE industry effectively at both local and national levels.

Literature Review

Conference and Seminar Management

Conference and seminar management is a crucial component of the MICE industry, playing a significant role in enhancing a country's economic and tourism potential. Effective management requires meticulous planning and organization to ensure all elements proceed smoothly and meet participants' needs to the highest degree (Chaobanpho et al., 2018). One of the critical factors in management is venue selection, considering accessibility, size appropriateness, quality of services, and participants' comfort (Klinmalai & Kaewlai, 2024). Additionally, time and resource management are essential; appropriate scheduling, adequate resource allocation, and coordination among different teams contribute to efficient operations. Excellent service is another indispensable element. Training staff to have good service skills, creating a friendly atmosphere, and meeting participants' needs will help create memorable experiences and high satisfaction among attendees (Rane et al., 2023).

Event Management Theory emphasizes comprehensive planning and management before, during, and after the event. The use of technology has become increasingly important in the digital age, including digital platforms for registration, communication applications, virtual reality, and live streaming technologies (Getz & Page, 2024). In summary, effective management requires thorough planning and management across all aspects, from venue selection and time/resource management to excellent service and modern technology utilization. These elements are essential to create memorable experiences, increase participant satisfaction, and sustainably grow the MICE industry.

MICE Industry

The MICE industry plays a crucial role in promoting the economy and tourism of a country. Its influence extends beyond generating tourism revenue to stimulating local development, creating jobs, and enhancing international competitiveness (Lim & Zhu, 2018). Research often focuses on examining factors that contribute to the success of MICE events, including economic aspects such as GDP growth, investment in infrastructure, and efficient budget management (Anas et al., 2020). Additionally, country-level governments play a critical role in setting policies and measures to promote MICE events through various projects, building infrastructure, and promoting marketing abroad. Collaboration among tourism boards, chambers of commerce, and business organizations is also crucial for the success of MICE events (Suchonwanich, 2023).

Analyzing the competitive environment in the MICE industry and employing effective marketing strategies are essential. This analysis helps organizations and event planners adapt and respond quickly to market changes (Litvinova-Kulikova et al., 2023). Strategies to attract international attendees include building a positive image, publicizing through various channels, and organizing engaging activities. The use of technology in communication and management also enhances efficiency (Haris et al., 2023). The MICE industry faces several challenges, such as competition from other countries, technological changes, and shifts in consumer behavior. Research emphasizes studying and developing new strategies to remain competitive in the global market (Chaobanpho et al., 2018).

Consumer Behavior

The study of consumer behavior in conferences and seminars is crucial for organizations to develop effective strategies to attract and retain customers. Understanding the factors that influence the decision-making process for selecting event venues, as well as the perceived value and expectations from attending events, is essential in creating memorable experiences for participants (Somsak et al., 2023). Consumer behavior in MICE events can be analyzed from various dimensions, such as psychological, social, and cultural factors. These factors significantly impact decision-making and customer satisfaction. For instance, consumers often decide on event venues based on perceived value, such as comfort, safety, and various amenities (Rane et al., 2023). Furthermore, setting accurate expectations and meeting those expectations play a crucial role in generating satisfaction and loyalty among attendees.

The study of psychological and social factors influencing the behavior of MICE event attendees remains a fascinating topic. For instance, research on satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth reveals these as critical factors affecting the success of MICE events. Attendee satisfaction can lead to brand or event loyalty, further resulting in positive word-of-mouth promotion (Dalgıç & Birdir, 2020). Thus, fostering satisfaction and loyalty is a crucial strategy for retaining and attracting new customers. Analyzing consumer behavior in MICE events can also link to marketing and management studies. For example, employing technology to enhance user experience, such as digital platforms for registration and attendee management, can significantly improve attendee convenience and satisfaction (Senee, 2023).

Analyzing consumer behavior and responding to their needs can lead to the development of effective strategies for managing MICE events, adding value to participants, and developing strategies that meet the needs and expectations of consumers. Understanding the factors that influence decision-making and creating satisfaction can help organizations attract and retain customers effectively. Additionally, it can foster loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, all of which are factors that contribute to the success of MICE events (Qamariah & Muchtar, 2019).

Management Strategies

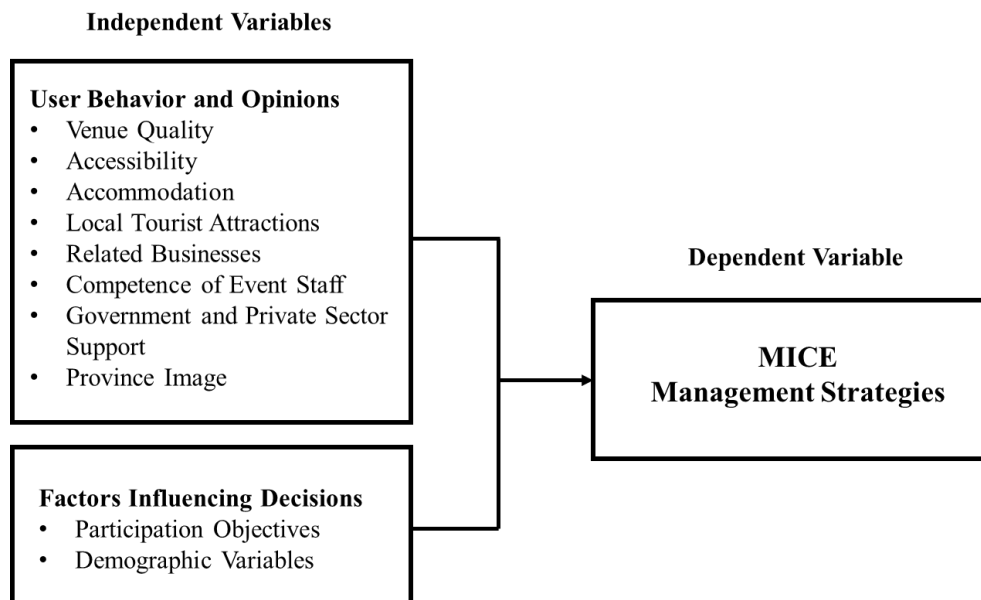
In the MICE industry, effective management strategies are essential to ensure smooth operations and successful events. This encompasses several critical components such as resource allocation, where ensuring the optimal use of financial, human, and material resources is key to delivering a high-quality event (Anas et al., 2020). Proper coordination among various teams involved in organizing the event, including logistics, marketing, and customer service teams, is necessary to avoid miscommunication and ensure that all aspects of the event run smoothly (Galli, 2021). Staff training is another crucial factor; providing continuous professional development helps in enhancing service quality and ensures that staff can respond effectively to the needs and expectations of participants (Damery et al., 2021). Furthermore, leveraging technology plays a pivotal role in modern event management. The adoption of advanced event management software allows for streamlined operations, from registration and scheduling to real-time updates during the event. Communication tools, such as mobile apps and digital platforms, enable better interaction between participants and organizers, enhancing the overall attendee experience (Abhulimen & Ejike, 2024). Additionally, data analytics tools can be used to gather insights from past events, which can inform future strategies and improve event outcomes (Sarker, 2021).

Collaboration with stakeholders is equally vital for the success of MICE events. Engaging with government agencies helps in obtaining necessary permits, ensuring security, and promoting the event at a national level. Partnerships with the private sector, including sponsors, vendors, and service providers, contribute to the quality and attractiveness of the event (Yoon & Wang, 2023). This collaboration often extends to local communities, where involving local businesses and resources can enhance the economic impact of the event on the host location (Pereira et al., 2021). Developing infrastructure tailored to the needs of the MICE industry is also critical. This includes building and maintaining venues that meet international standards, providing adequate transportation options, and ensuring accessibility for all participants. Ensuring participant satisfaction through these strategies not only boosts the success of individual events but also contributes to the broader, sustainable growth of the MICE industry, making it a significant driver of economic and social development (Buathong & Lai, 2017).

Research Framework and Hypotheses

Figure 1

Research Framework



Based on the conceptual framework of this study, the following research hypotheses were formulated to examine the differences in opinions and the factors influencing MICE service usage in Nakhon Si Thammarat:

Hypothesis 1: Differences in Opinions on MICE Service Usage - There are significant differences in opinions regarding the choice of conference and seminar services among Thai MICE tourists attending MICE activities in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Hypothesis 2: Differences in Opinions Based on Participation Objectives - There are significant differences in opinions regarding the choice of conference and seminar services among Thai MICE tourists with different participation objectives in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

These hypotheses were tested using One-way ANOVA to examine the mean differences between groups at a 95% confidence level.

Research Methodology

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, comprising both quantitative and qualitative research methods as follows:

Quantitative Research

1. **Sample Group:** The sample consisted of 400 participants who attended meetings and seminars under the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat province. The sampling technique used was a purposive sampling method, targeting only those who attended MICE events, followed by convenient sampling.

2. **Research Instrument:** A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data on the behaviors and opinions of service users. The questionnaire included questions about the purpose of attending the event, travel arrangements, modes of transportation, use of public transport, duration of participation, group size, expenses, information sources, and services used in conjunction with MICE activities. The questionnaire consisted of 36 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.85.

3. **Data Collection:** The questionnaires were distributed in paper form to a randomly selected sample of MICE event participants in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

4. **Data Analysis:** Data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage, and inferential statistics such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine differences between groups.

Qualitative Research

1. **Sample Group:** The sample included 25 representatives from relevant agencies, such as service business operators, event organizers, hotels, restaurants, and travel companies. These representatives were selected based on their direct involvement in the MICE industry and their knowledge of the needs and challenges faced in organizing MICE events.

2. **Research Instrument:** In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather data on factors influencing service choice decisions and additional opinions on developing the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat province. The interview questions covered areas such as event organization challenges, service quality, and collaboration with other agencies.

3. **Data Collection:** In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held with the sample group to collect detailed information. Sample interview questions included topics like "What are the main challenges you face when organizing MICE events?" and "How do you collaborate with other service providers to enhance the quality of MICE events?"

4. **Data Analysis:** Data from the interviews and discussions were analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes and recommendations for developing MICE management strategies in Nakhon Si Thammarat province. Three coders were involved in the content analysis to ensure reliability and validity of the findings.

Research Findings

This study analyzed the basic data of service users for meetings and seminars supporting the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat province using a structured questionnaire. The analysis included basic demographic information of respondents and behavioral data of tourists. The findings on the behavior of service users for meetings and seminars supporting the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat province are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1*Behavioral Data of Service Users for Meetings and Seminars in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province*

Purpose of Participation	Number of People	Percentage
1. Objective of Participation		
- Corporate meetings/seminars	113	23.50%
- Incentive travel	68	14.20%
- Professional conferences/seminars	104	21.70%
- Exhibitions/trade shows	121	25.20%
- Special events	74	15.40%
2. Mode of Travel to Events		
- Solo travel	51	12.80%
- Family	48	12.00%
- Friends	165	41.30%
- Organization	92	23.00%
- Tour company	26	6.50%
- Others	18	4.50%
3. Mode of Transportation Used		
- Airplane	21	5.30%
- Public bus	39	9.80%
- Tour company vehicle	24	6.00%
- Rental car	35	8.80%
- Train	22	5.50%
- Private car	184	46.00%
- Using others' vehicle	57	14.20%
- Others	18	4.50%
4. Use of Public Transportation		
- Not used	161	40.30%
- Used, please specify	239	59.70%
- Taxi	40	10.00%
- Songthaew (shared truck)	120	30.00%
- Tricycle	21	5.30%
- Motorcycle taxi	44	11.00%
- Rental car	14	3.50%
5. Duration of Participation		
- 1 day	203	50.70%
- 2-3 days	114	28.50%
- 4-5 days	54	13.50%
- More than 5 days	29	7.20%
6. Number of Participants in Group		
- 2-5 people	57	14.20%
- 16-30 people	85	21.30%
- 31-50 people	98	24.50%
- 51-100 people	86	21.50%
- 101-200 people	44	11.00%
- More than 200 people	30	7.50%
7. Participation Cost		
- Less than 1,000 THB	194	48.50%
- 1,000 - 2,000 THB	85	21.30%
- 2,001 - 3,000 THB	66	16.50%
- 3,001 - 4,000 THB	40	10.00%
- More than 4,000 THB	15	3.80%
8. Sources of Activity Information		
- Internet	193	33.00%

Purpose of Participation	Number of People	Percentage
- Newspapers/magazines	21	3.60%
- TV/radio	36	6.20%
- Flyers	45	7.70%
- Your organization	121	20.70%
- Relatives/friends	106	18.20%
- Billboards	51	8.70%
- Others	11	1.90%
9. Services Used Alongside MICE Activities		
- Hotels/accommodation	183	28.60%
- Transportation businesses	58	9.10%
- Restaurants/eateries	131	20.50%
- Tour companies	31	4.80%
- Souvenir shops	63	8.30%
- Spas	17	2.70%
- Shopping malls	90	14.10%
- Entertainment venues	25	3.90%
- Conference/seminar organizing firms	26	4.10%
- Others	26	4.10%
10. Factors Influencing Participation		
- Event attractiveness	209	23.70%
- Service standards	88	10.00%
- Venue quality	148	16.80%
- Conference/seminar organizing firms	57	6.50%
- Hotels/accommodation	91	10.30%
- Transportation	32	3.60%
- Restaurants/eateries	65	7.40%
- Tourist attractions	64	7.30%
- Staff competence	36	4.10%
- Province image	34	3.90%
- Government support	23	2.60%
- Private sector support	13	1.50%
- Your organization	18	2.00%
- Others	3	0.30%

From the behavioral data of users attending meetings and seminars in Nakhon Si Thammarat, it was found that the primary purpose of participating in MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) activities was to attend exhibitions/trade shows, accounting for 25.20%. This was followed by corporate meetings/seminars at 23.50% and professional meetings/seminars at 21.70%, respectively. Additionally, most participants attended with friends, accounting for 41.30%, and used personal vehicles for transportation, accounting for 46.00%. This indicates the importance of convenience and flexibility in travel for attendees. Public transportation was still utilized, with 59.70% of participants using public transportation services, primarily two-row buses and taxis, at 30.00% and 10.00%, respectively.

Most participants attended the activities for one day, accounting for 50.70%, and participated in groups of 31-50 members, accounting for 24.50%. The majority of participants spent less than 1,000 THB, accounting for 48.50%, reflecting the possibility that participants were students or low-income groups. Most event information was obtained via the internet, accounting for 33.00%, and organizational channels, accounting for 20.70%. Key services used in conjunction with MICE activities included hotels/accommodations (28.60%) and restaurants

(20.50%), emphasizing the importance of these facilities in attracting participants. The most influential factors in the decision to participate were the interest in the event (23.70%), service standards (10.00%), and the venue (16.80%). From the analysis of these behavioral data, marketing and management strategies can be developed to enhance the effectiveness of attracting target groups and promoting the sustainable growth of the MICE industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The study's findings on the factors influencing satisfaction in choosing MICE services in Nakhon Si Thammarat are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2

Opinions on Choosing Conference and Seminar Services to Support the MICE Industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

Opinion Aspect	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
1. Venue Quality	4.32	0.57	Very High
2. Accessibility	4.29	0.57	Very High
3. Accommodation	4.36	0.54	Very High
4. Local Tourist Attractions	4.35	0.54	Very High
5. Related Businesses	4.31	0.54	Very High
6. Competence of Event Staff	4.33	0.53	Very High
7. Government and Private Sector Support	4.37	0.55	Very High
8. Province Image	4.34	0.55	Very High
Overall Average	4.33	0.49	Very High

From Table 2, it is evident that all factors received average scores at the highest level, indicating a high level of satisfaction among respondents in various aspects related to MICE management and services. Notably, the support from government and private sectors ($\bar{x} = 4.37$, S.D. = 0.55) received the highest score, highlighting the crucial role of government and private sector support in promoting and developing meetings and seminars. Clear policies and support can enhance the confidence of both organizers and participants. Additionally, the aspect of accommodation ($\bar{x} = 4.36$, S.D. = 0.54) also received a high score, underscoring the importance of quality and diverse accommodations that can meet the needs of participants with varied incomes and lodging preferences. The province's image ($\bar{x} = 4.34$, S.D. = 0.55) is another high-scoring factor, indicating that a positive image of Nakhon Si Thammarat significantly contributes to attracting service users. The presence of diverse and beautiful tourist attractions, along with maintaining security and a good environment, can enhance the appeal of MICE events.

The competency of event staff ($\bar{x} = 4.33$, S.D. = 0.53) and the event venues ($\bar{x} = 4.32$, S.D. = 0.57) also received high average scores, emphasizing the importance of skilled and capable personnel in providing excellent service, as well as venues that meet high standards and are suitable for various types of events. Furthermore, accessibility ($\bar{x} = 4.29$, S.D. = 0.57) is crucial, as having convenient and easily accessible transportation systems influences participants' decisions to attend events. The related businesses aspect ($\bar{x} = 4.31$, S.D. = 0.54) reflects the importance of having comprehensive services and amenities, such as restaurants and shops, that can meet the needs of service users. In summary, development and improvement in all these mentioned areas will significantly enhance the efficiency and attractiveness of hosting meetings and seminars in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Comparative Analysis

To test the research hypotheses, a Comparative Analysis using One-way ANOVA was conducted. This analysis aims to investigate the differences in opinions among Thai MICE tourists attending events in Nakhon Si Thammarat, as well as the differences based on their participation objectives. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the following tables.

Table 3

Results of One-way ANOVA for Opinions on MICE Services Based on Demographic Variables

Opinion Aspect	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Venue Quality	Between Groups	1.03	1	1.03	3.17	0.076
	Within Groups	128.64	398	0.32		
	Total	129.66	399			
Accessibility	Between Groups	0.63	1	0.63	1.98	0.161
	Within Groups	127.82	398	0.32		
	Total	128.45	399			
Accommodation	Between Groups	1.14	1	1.14	3.94	0.048
	Within Groups	114.80	398	0.29		
	Total	115.94	399			
Local Tourist Attractions	Between Groups	0.40	1	0.40	1.39	0.24
	Within Groups	115.47	398	0.29		
	Total	115.87	399			
Related Businesses	Between Groups	0.95	1	0.95	3.32	0.069
	Within Groups	113.80	398	0.29		
	Total	114.75	399			
Competence of Event Staff	Between Groups	0.61	1	0.61	2.15	0.143
	Within Groups	113.58	398	0.29		
	Total	114.19	399			
Government and Private Sector Support	Between Groups	0.78	1	0.78	2.56	0.111
	Within Groups	122.01	398	0.31		
	Total	122.79	399			
Province Image	Between Groups	0.99	1	0.99	3.32	0.069
	Within Groups	118.85	398	0.30		
	Total	119.84	399			
Overall	Between Groups	0.80	1	0.80	3.32	0.069
	Within Groups	95.78	398	0.24		
	Total	96.58	399			

The analysis in Table 3 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA performed to compare the opinions on various aspects of MICE services among different demographic groups. The significance values (Sig.) for most aspects, such as venue quality ((0.076, accessibility ((0.161, and related businesses ((0.069, are greater than 0.05, indicating no statistically significant differences in opinions among the groups. However, the aspect of accommodation has a Sig. value of 0.048, which is less than 0.05, suggesting a significant difference in opinions regarding accommodation among the demographic groups. This implies that the satisfaction levels with accommodation services vary significantly across different groups. Overall, the hypothesis that there are no differences in opinions on MICE services among demographic

groups is mostly accepted, except for the aspect of accommodation. This highlights the importance of tailoring accommodation services to meet the diverse needs of different user groups in the MICE industry.

Table 4

One-way ANOVA Results for Differences in Opinions on MICE Services Based on Participation Objectives

Opinion Aspect	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Venue Quality	Between Groups	5.38	4	1.34	4.27	0.002
	Within Groups	124.28	395	0.31		
	Total	129.66	399			
Accessibility	Between Groups	4.37	4	1.09	3.48	0.008
	Within Groups	124.08	395	0.31		
	Total	128.45	399			
Accommodation	Between Groups	3.37	4	0.84	2.96	0.020
	Within Groups	112.56	395	0.28		
	Total	115.94	399			
Local Tourist Attractions	Between Groups	3.84	4	0.96	3.38	0.010
	Within Groups	112.04	395	0.28		
	Total	115.87	399			
Related Businesses	Between Groups	5.03	4	1.26	4.53	0.001
	Within Groups	109.72	395	0.28		
	Total	114.75	399			
Competence of Event Staff	Between Groups	2.93	4	0.73	2.61	0.036
	Within Groups	111.26	395	0.28		
	Total	114.19	399			
Government and Private Sector Support	Between Groups	3.46	4	0.86	2.86	0.023
	Within Groups	119.33	395	0.30		
	Total	122.79	399			
Province Image	Between Groups	6.29	4	1.57	5.47	0.000
	Within Groups	113.55	395	0.29		
	Total	119.84	399			
Overall	Between Groups	3.97	4	0.99	4.23	0.002
	Within Groups	92.61	395	0.23		
	Total	96.58	399			

The results presented in Table 4 indicate significant differences in opinions on various aspects of MICE services based on the objectives of participation. For instance, the aspect of "Venue Quality" shows a significant difference with an F-value of 4.27 and a p-value of 0.002, suggesting that participants with different objectives have varying opinions on the quality of the venues. Similarly, "Accessibility" ($F=3.48$, $p=0.008$) and "Accommodation" ($F=2.96$, $p=0.020$) also show significant differences, indicating that the ease of access and quality of accommodations are perceived differently depending on the participants' objectives. Moreover, significant differences are noted in "Local Tourist Attractions" ($F=3.38$, $p=0.010$), "Related Businesses" ($F=4.53$, $p=0.001$), and "Competence of Event Staff" ($F=2.61$, $p=0.036$). The aspect of "Government and Private Sector Support" ($F=2.86$, $p=0.023$) and "Province Image" ($F=5.47$, $p=0.000$) also exhibit significant differences. Overall, these findings support the hypothesis that participants with different objectives have distinct opinions on the MICE services in Nakhon Si Thammarat, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies to address these varying perceptions.

Qualitative Analysis Results

Qualitative findings from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with representatives from the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) industry in Nakhon Si Thammarat can be summarized with the following emerging themes:

Theme 1: High-Standard Facilities and Cleanliness

Respondents highlighted the importance of having event venues that meet high standards of cleanliness and are suitable for the type of events being held. This aspect significantly impacts the satisfaction and overall experience of the attendees.

Theme 2: Friendly and Flexible Service

The provision of friendly and flexible services by the staff was identified as a critical factor. Staff should be capable of adapting to various weather conditions and other situational changes to enhance the participant experience.

Theme 3: Accessibility and Transportation

In terms of event venues and accessibility, respondents indicated that venues in Nakhon Si Thammarat should adhere to high standards, be clean, and be appropriate for the type of events being held. Additionally, staff should provide a friendly and flexible service according to the weather conditions, and there should be a rotation of event venues according to the seasons or local festivals to increase attractiveness. Improvements to the public transportation system, making it more diverse and efficient, are also recommended to facilitate access to event locations.

Theme 4: Accommodation and Tourist Attractions

Regarding accommodation and tourist attractions, it was suggested that the province should offer a variety of accommodation options to cater to different preferences. Enhancing navigation systems and promoting public transportation services during periods when they are scarce or non-existent is necessary. Furthermore, promoting tourism in Nakhon Si Thammarat, which has diverse attractions but may pose travel inconveniences, should be prioritized by presenting well-planned travel itineraries.

Theme 5: Business and Staff Competency

In the context of related businesses and staff competency, businesses such as restaurants and travel companies involved in MICE should stay updated with current trends and be adaptable to changes. It was also suggested that event staff should provide excellent service, be attentive, and be capable of giving additional information to participants. Continuous training and skill development for staff to meet service demands effectively are crucial.

Theme 6: Government Support and Provincial Image

Concerning government support and the province's image, it was recommended that public information dissemination should be increased and venues capable of hosting large-scale events should be developed. Prioritizing city development to be well-prepared in aspects such as venues, information, and transportation systems is necessary. Initiating pilot projects or models and enhancing the province's image to be more known and appealing by focusing on safety and stability are also essential steps.

Discussion

Behavior and Opinions of MICE Service Users in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

This study reveals the diverse characteristics of MICE service users in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, covering various aspects such as age, marital status, educational level, and occupation. The majority of the sample consists of young individuals aged between 20-29 years with a bachelor's degree. These users typically have modest incomes, making participation in MICE activities an attractive option for gaining knowledge and networking without incurring high costs. This finding aligns with Rane et al. (2023), who noted that participating in MICE activities is an effective way to build networks and enhance knowledge at a low cost. Additionally, the preference for private and public transportation reflects the importance of convenience and accessibility, consistent with Klinmalai and Kaewlai (2024), who emphasized the significance of convenience in venue selection. Engaging in activities with friends and professional networks is also crucial for creating enjoyable experiences and knowledge exchange, which enhances relationships among participants. The effectiveness of disseminating event information through the Internet and related agencies highlights the efficiency of communication and promotion, corroborating the findings of Getz and Page (2024), who stressed the vital role of digital technology in communication and managing event participants.

Factors Influencing the Decision to Use MICE Services

The analysis of service users' opinions reveals several factors influencing the decision to use MICE services, including the attractiveness of the event, service standards, and the venue. Users prioritize venues that meet high standards, are clean, and suitable for the nature of the event, as these factors significantly enhance satisfaction and create a positive impression. This finding is consistent with Klinmalai and Kaewlai (2024), who emphasized the importance of high-quality and comfortable venues in attracting participants. Additionally, support from the government and private sectors plays a crucial role in building confidence among event organizers and participants. Clear policies and support can significantly boost confidence, echoing the findings of Suchonwanich (2023), who found that government support is vital in promoting and developing the MICE industry. Quality and diverse accommodations are also important factors for service users, catering to participants' varied income levels and accommodation preferences. This is supported by Davidson and Cope (2003), who noted that high-quality accommodations can significantly enhance user satisfaction.

A positive image of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province effectively attracts participants, with diverse and beautiful tourist attractions, safety, and a good environment contributing significantly to the attractiveness of MICE events. Litvinova-Kulikova et al. (2023) supported this by indicating that a good venue image influences participants' decision to attend. The skills and competencies of service staff are also critical in creating a positive impression and enhancing user satisfaction. Skilled and competent staff can significantly improve the user experience, aligning with Rane et al. (2023), who found that staff competence is a key factor influencing user satisfaction. Additionally, convenient and accessible transportation systems

influence participants' decisions, and comprehensive services and facilities, such as restaurants and shops, effectively meet users' needs. This finding aligns with Getz and Page (2024), who emphasized the importance of convenient transportation and comprehensive services in enhancing user satisfaction.

Guidelines for MICE Management in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

The development of MICE management strategies in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province needs to focus on enhancing the venues to meet high standards of cleanliness and suitability for the nature of the events. Additionally, there is a need to improve the diversity and convenience of public transportation systems. This research indicates that large-scale event venues should be established in urban areas with convenient transportation systems that can accommodate a large number of participants. These venues should adhere to international standards and be equipped with modern technology to support MICE events. This recommendation aligns with Klinmalai and Kaewlai (2024), who emphasized the importance of high-quality venues and convenient transportation in increasing participant satisfaction and attracting attendees. Furthermore, it is essential to categorize and systematize accommodation options to provide choices that meet the diverse needs of service users. Improving navigation systems to hotels and accommodations is crucial to ensure ease and speed of access. Promoting and developing tourist attractions within the province is also vital to increase the appeal and attract more MICE service users. Davidson and Cope (2003) supported this idea, highlighting that diverse and high-quality accommodation is a key factor in enhancing participant satisfaction.

In terms of related businesses, it is important to promote service businesses such as restaurants and travel agencies to be well-informed and adaptable to changing times. Suchonwanich (2023) indicated that comprehensive service businesses that meet the needs of users significantly contribute to a positive experience and satisfaction among participants. Additionally, developing the skills and readiness of service personnel is crucial. Having staff with the necessary skills and abilities to provide excellent service can significantly enhance the user experience. This finding is consistent with Rane et al. (2023), who found that staff competence significantly impacts user satisfaction. Government and private sector support in implementing pilot or model projects to develop the province's image, focusing on safety and security, will enhance the province's potential and competitiveness in the national and international MICE market. This proposal aligns with Litvinova-Kulikova et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of government support and inter-agency collaboration in sustainable MICE industry development.

Conclusions

This study explored the behaviors and opinions of MICE service users in Nakhon Si Thammarat province and developed effective management strategies. Key findings indicate that most MICE participants are young adults aged 29-20 with bachelor's degrees, reflecting a preference for affordable professional development. Convenience and accessibility of transportation significantly influence venue choice. Participants prioritize high-quality venues, robust support from government and private sectors, and diverse accommodation options. The province's cultural and natural attractions, safety, and well-maintained environment enhance

its appeal for MICE activities. Additionally, the skills and service quality of personnel are crucial for creating a positive experience.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Venue Standards and Accessibility: Develop large-scale venues with international standards in urban areas, equipped with modern technology, to accommodate a significant number of participants. Improve public transportation systems for better accessibility.

2. Diversify and Upgrade Accommodations: Create a classification system for hotels to offer varied and high-quality lodging options. Improve navigation and public transport services to these accommodations.

3. Promote Tourism: Invest in the development and promotion of diverse and attractive tourist spots to make the province more appealing to MICE participants.

4. Support Related Businesses: Enhance the knowledge and adaptability of related businesses such as restaurants and tour companies to meet evolving demands.

5. Develop Human Resources: Focus on training and developing the skills of personnel involved in MICE to provide excellent service and meet participants' expectations. Training should emphasize customer service excellence, cultural sensitivity, and the use of digital tools and technologies relevant to MICE events. Additionally, language proficiency, especially in English and other major languages, should be enhanced to cater to international participants.

6. Government and Private Sector Support: Implement pilot projects and initiatives to enhance the province's image, ensuring safety and security to build confidence among event organizers and participants. Furthermore, strategies should be developed to effectively compete with neighboring provinces, focusing on the unique cultural and natural attractions of Nakhon Si Thammarat and its improving infrastructure.

Implications

The findings highlight the importance of comprehensive planning and collaboration among various stakeholders in enhancing the MICE industry. By addressing the identified factors, Nakhon Si Thammarat can position itself as a competitive destination for MICE events, boosting local economic growth and international competitiveness. However, to stay competitive with neighboring provinces, it's crucial to continuously innovate and differentiate the offerings based on Nakhon Si Thammarat's unique strengths, ensuring a distinct advantage in attracting both domestic and international MICE participants.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track the impact of implemented strategies on the MICE industry in the province. Additionally, comparative studies between different provinces or countries could provide deeper insights into best practices and innovative approaches to MICE management. Further exploration into the competitive dynamics between Nakhon Si Thammarat and neighboring provinces could reveal critical factors that drive the decision-making process among MICE participants. Exploring the role of emerging technologies in enhancing the MICE experience could also offer valuable directions for future development.

References

- Abhulimen, A. O., & Ejike, O. G. (2024). Technology integration in project and event management: Empowering women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6(8), 2588-2602.
- Anas, M. S., Maddiah, N. A., Noor Eizamly, N. U. E., Sulaiman, N. A., & Wee, H. (2020). Key success factors toward MICE industry: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)*, 12(1), 1-34.
- Buathong, K., & Lai, P. C. (2017). Perceived attributes of event sustainability in the MICE industry in Thailand: A viewpoint from governmental, academic, venue and practitioner. *Sustainability*, 9(7), 1151.
- Chaobanpho, Y., Angsukanjanaku, J., & Somkietikul, C. (2018). Development of competitiveness in the MICE industry for the Eastern economic corridor of Thailand. *International Journal of Development Administration Research*, 1(1), 9-18.
- Dalgiç, A., & Birdir, K. (2020). Key success factors on loyalty of festival visitors: the mediating effect of festival experience and festival image. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 16(1), 28-38.
- Damery, S., Flanagan, S., Jones, J., & Jolly, K. (2021). The effect of providing staff training and enhanced support to care homes on care processes, safety climate and avoidable harms: evaluation of a care home quality improvement programme in England. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(14), 7581.
- Davidson, R., & Cope, B. (2003). *Business Travel*. Pearson.
- Galli, B. J. (2021). Effective strategies for communicating and managing communication in a project team: My perspective. *International Journal of Applied Industrial Engineering*, 8(1), 1-11.
- Getz, D., & Page, S. J. (2024). *Event Studies: Theory and Management for Planned Events*. Taylor & Francis.
- Haris, A., Samosir, H. E., & Lubis, S. H. (2023). Marketing communications as strategy expanding market share in era 4.0. *International Journal of Social Science and Business*, 7(1), 188-198.
- Imjai, N., & Sangthong, M. (2023). The readiness of service businesses for the MICE Strategy in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. *Narkbhutparitat Journal Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University*, 15(3), 83-94.
- Klinmalai, S., & Kaewlai, P. (2024). Assessment and Selection Criteria for MICE Destinations and Convention Centers in Thailand. *Journal of Architectural/Planning Research and Studies (JARS)*, 21(2), 245-262.
- Lim, C., & Zhu, L. (2018). Examining the link between meetings, incentive, exhibitions, and conventions (MICE) and tourism demand using generalized methods of moments (GMM): the case of Singapore. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 35(7), 846-855.
- Litvinova-Kulikova, L., Aliyeva, Z., & David, L. D. (2023). MICE tourism: How the pandemic has changed it. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 14(26), 197-218.
- Pereira, L., Jerónimo, C., Sempiterno, M., Lopes da Costa, R., Dias, Á., & António, N. (2021).

- Events and festivals contribution for local sustainability. *Sustainability*, 13(3), 1520.
- Qamariah, I., & Muchtar, Y. C. (2019, October). Service Quality of MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition) Industry. *2019 International Conference on Organizational Innovation (ICOI 2019)*, 614-618.
- Rane, N. L., Achari, A., & Choudhary, S. P. (2023). Enhancing customer loyalty through quality of service: Effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction, experience, relationship, and engagement. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science*, 5(5), 427-452.
- Sarker, I. H. (2021). Data science and analytics: an overview from data-driven smart computing, decision-making and applications perspective. *SN Computer Science*, 2(5), 377.
- Senee, K. (2023). *A study of factors affecting the selection of a sustainable conference venue (MICE) of Bangkok residents towards secondary cities* [Doctoral dissertation]. Mahidol University.
- Somsak, N., Kaewdang, P., & Tinakhat, P. (2023). *The Antecedents of City Marketing, Event Tourism, and Social Media Marketing for Promoting Destination Image of Phitsanulok as a MICE City*. A Concept Paper.
- Somsawat, S., & Tananpang, C. (2020). How dose Meeting, Incentive, Conventions, Exhibitions (MICE) Industry survive through Covid- 19era?. *Journal of Innovation and Management*, 5, 129-145.
- Suchonwanich, J. (2023). MICE industry promotion policy of government agencies .*PAAT Journal*, 5(9), 96-109.
- Urwongse, K. (2019). Focus Group Discussion: Effective Qualitative Data Collection Technique. *STOU Education Journal*, 12(1), 17-30.
- Wongmonta, S., & Phorkha, W. (2018). An approach for enhancing Thailand's potential to be a MICE destination city. *Manutsat Paritat: Journal of Humanities*, 39(1), 96-112.
- Yoon, T. H., & Wang, S. (2023). How important is stakeholder collaboration in the mice industry: Antecedents and outcomes of supply chain integration. *Sustainability*, 15(20), 14966.