

Domestic MICE in Thailand

Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) in Thailand have helped bring revenue and investment into the country, and created more jobs in related industries, e.g. contractors, freight forwarders, restaurants, hotels, tour agents, shopping centers, etc. Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), as the government agency tasked with developing Thailand's MICE industry, has launched an urgent program to encourage international MICE travelers to confidently choose Thailand as their event destination and also to expand the domestic MICE market.

Increasing domestic MICE events is regarded as another way to boost Thailand's economy, especially during the economic slowdown. To achieve this, TCEB is currently evaluating the behavior and spending patterns of domestic MICE travelers so as to initiate the best policy and tailor a campaign capable of stimulating the domestic MICE market.

TCEB has undertaken a qualitative analysis of the domestic MICE market, which will be followed by a quantitative analysis to complete the comprehension.

The qualitative analysis was carried out under two formats: 1) one-on-one in-depth interviews of 8 decision makers involved in organising meetings/ seminars, each one hour long. Four executives are from private companies, while the other four are government officials; 2) 2-hour focus group discussions with five separate groups, each consisting of 4-6 persons. The five groups were corporate meeting/ incentive travelers with revenue more than 5 billion baht per year, corporate meeting/ incentive travelers with revenue from 400 million-5 billion baht per year, convention delegates aged 25-40, convention delegates aged 41-55 and convention delegates over age 55.

The results of the qualitative analysis are as follows:

Format of MICE in Thailand

Given the diverse format and patterns of meetings, seminars and incentives for both the public and private sectors within the country, the information has been divided into those responsible for expenses and targeted participants.

	Organisation's Internal Meeting / Travel	Convention
Person responsible for expenses	Organisation / the unit that organises	Participants
Targeted participants	- Staff/employees of an organisation - Persons directly related to the organiser, e.g. agencies of the company, citizens within the area of the organiser	- Public - Members / personnel within related professions

Convention refers to a meeting, training course or seminar organised to disseminate knowledge, exchange views or for the purpose of consultation.

Convention organisers include government agencies, associations, institutions and corporations

The target participants are not limited to any one organisation. People of the same profession from various sectors or the general public can participate. Participants make the decision whether or not to join and are liable for the expenses of the meeting wholly or partly.

Some companies have a policy of developing employees through learning/training activities and the staff can reimburse expenses for the training/meeting/seminar from the company subject to approval by the HR department depending on their subsidy policy. The same applies to government agencies. When policy dictates a partial subsidy of the learning expenses, these expenses are subsidised partly by head office and partly by the participant. For a professional association that collects annual fees from its members, there is usually an attendance charge for members at a special rate that is lower than for non-members when the association organises the convention.

Objectives of organising meetings/ incentives

The objectives of organising meetings/ incentives vary for each organisation and can be summarised as follow :

Organisation's Internal Meeting / Travel	Convention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational welfare for staff • Enhancing relationships between personnel within the organisation • Rewarding the staff for achieving targets • Enhancing knowledge and expertise of personnel in the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminating knowledge or new information • Brainstorming or exchanging views

Some organisations try to hold one meeting for various purposes in order to reduce expenses during the current recession. However, this often leads to tight schedules and overall exhaustion for the participants, resulting in the meeting's objectives not being reached. One example of this is the annual recreation time for employees that includes training, brainstorming and teambuilding.

It is therefore recommended that while one event can have multiple purposes, the organiser must have a clear priority for the objectives. These objectives should not demand too much of the participants' time and should be complementary, e.g. recreation and enhancement of personnel relationships within the company.

Elements of decision making for organising meetings/ incentives

The elements of decision making for organising meetings / incentives are:

1. Trainer for the topic/subject with the following elements:

Organisers

Needs of Organisers

- Reputable trainer
- Trainer with expertise in the subject
- Trainer with high recommendations from many corporations

Obstacles for Organisers

- Reputable trainer usually means high costs or over the budget
- Scheduling of trainers can be difficult because of his/her tight schedule

Participants

Participants' satisfaction

- Trainer who is knowledgeable in the subject
- Trainer whose delivery is entertaining and with a sense of humour
- Trainer whose technique draws attention and engagement from the participants, with real experiences cited as examples

Participants' dissatisfaction

- Trainer who delivers a purely academic content
- Trainer who delivers by reading slides
- Trainer who has a monotonous voice
- Trainer who cannot answer questions or answers unclearly

2. Expenses should be affordable or worthwhile. Generally, expenses will be considered as follows:

2.1 Activities

Organisers

- Activities undertaken during the meeting/ seminar can be organised by internal staff, resulting in cost saving, or organised by external professionals with numerous activities
- Activities are usually scheduled for the first day of the meeting/ seminar to take advantage of participants' excitement, readiness to share their views and enthusiasm for the activities. Tourism activities should be on the final day or on the way back.

Participants

Participants' satisfaction

- Have visits to provincial sites with a local guide, e.g. youth guide
- Have options of activities, e.g. log cabin, ATV vehicles, mountain climbing
- Visit to places that are difficult to access by one's self, e.g. mine visit
- Have a competition for rewards during the meeting/seminar.

Participants' dissatisfaction

- Tight schedule from morning to night is exhausting.
- The same activities as before.
- Stay in the hotel throughout the event without any outdoor ambience.
- Inflexible activities plan with no consideration for the participants, e.g. a change of shops for buying souvenirs.

2.2 Venue

There are numerous places to hold meetings/ incentives in Thailand. The popular ones include sea, mountains or waterfalls, with each being popular during different seasons. At the same time, venues should not be too far from Bangkok to save traveling time. The choices of venues are therefore limited accordingly, the same being true for both government agencies and corporations.



Beaches are popular during summer

- Pattaya, Rayong, Chanthaburi, Cha-am, Hua Hin



Mountains are popular during winter or rainy season

- Nakhon Nayok, Nakhon Ratchasima, Saraburi, Ratchaburi



Waterfalls are popular during rainy season

- Kanchanaburi

2.3 Hotel

Organisers

Needs of Organisers

- Different venue from previous years
- 3-5 hour traveling time
- Hygienic, safe with good ambience
- Large venue capable of accommodating all participants
- Full audio-visual facilities
- Large outdoor area for activities, e.g. walk rally, sports

Obstacles for Organisers

- Searching for accommodation within the set budget, especially for government agencies
- There were columns in the room
- No staff available to adjust/fix audio-visual when there is a problem

Participants

Participants' satisfaction

- Room to stay and meeting room is clean and beautiful
- New place, somewhere not been before
- Have nearby tourist & recreational spots
- Fresh ambience of the surroundings
- Delicious food
- Have many facilities e.g. swimming pool, spa, massage and karaoke

Participants' dissatisfaction

- Small room to stay and not very clean
- Hotel staff does not give attentive service
- Accommodation is far from the meeting room

2.4 Duration of stay

Meeting / incentives (except in Bangkok) for each organisation should be held for a total of 2 days/ 1 night, with Saturday and Sunday as prime consideration so as not to lose any work days.

The duration that satisfies both organiser and participants is 3 days/ 2 nights as activities can be done without being rushed or too exhausting.

In terms of time required to prepare for the actual meetings, in most cases the staff or person organising the meeting will go to the venue only 1 day in advance. However, the pre-meeting time is not popular because of the inconvenience of departure separately from the group. If participants are impressed with the destination or hotel, they usually come back later personally or with family and friends.

2.5 Vehicle and Traveling



Senior people (aged 55 and up) will consider whether they are physically capable of joining the meeting/ incentive by considering the hardships of the venue, distance and activities.

Personal needs of domestic MICE travelers

The needs of Thailand's domestic MICE travelers can be divided into five categories as follows:



Expectations with recommendations to fulfill the needs of domestic MICE travelers are:

1. Need for Relaxation

Expectation:

Annual recreation and incentives for employees at least once a year; must be distinct from a seminar. The organiser expects participants to be relaxed mentally and physically (mutual expectation). The knowledge session should add some entertainment/ humor to enliven the delivery and not be purely academic content.

Recommendation:

Activities: Avoid tight schedules for meetings & incentives, and any activities that require the use of physical strength.

Trainers: Should be capable of being entertaining, adding humor during their deliveries.

2. Need for a Sense of Pride

Expectation:

Incentives are organised for staff/agents who have achieved or surpassed their targets and are therefore viewed as rewards for the participants' success. Incentives are important for corporations as they encourage economic achievements, while participants gain a sense of pride in the recognition of their hard work and ability.

Recommendation:

To make the domestic meeting/ incentive trip comparable to that of an overseas trip, the organiser should consider the possibility of allowing each participant to bring along their family members as well.

3. Need for Self-Fulfillment

Expectation:

Some convention participants do not work in the field related to the subject of the convention, but have a personal interest in the subject and are willing to pay the attendance fee in order to learn the most out of their interest.

Recommendation:

Activities: These should enable the participants to learn and understand the actual implementation of the subject matter, eg. site visit, workshop with an actual experiment, etc.

Trainers: They should be able to explain the academic content in simple and understandable language, citing real case studies or inviting successful persons to share their experiences.

4. Need to Build Connections

Expectation:

At conventions, people of common interest or in the common field gather to meet. Some participants, especially businessmen and entrepreneurs, take the opportunity to get to know more people or build networking for future interest.

Recommendation:

Include activities that encourage networking among participants, e.g. SMEs seminar with a golf outing.

5. Need for Security in Profession

Expectation:

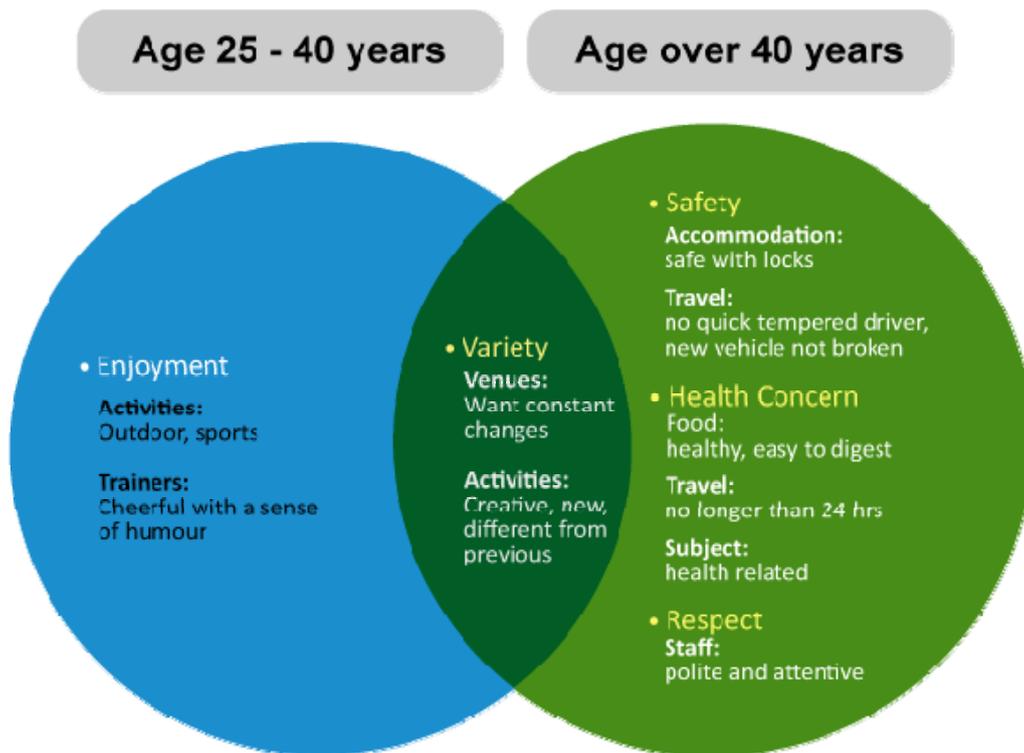
Learning and acquiring new knowledge for each participant’s career advancement has resulted in higher competition in the workplace, where people development to achieve greater work efficiency has become visibly important.

Recommendation:

Trainers must be real experts in the subject, capable of arousing participants’ curiosity and offering real experiences that will show the subject’s practicality in the work environment.

Other needs

In addition, different age groups have differing objectives to meetings/travel. Thus when meetings/travel are organised, the age group of the participants should be taken into consideration so that suitable activities and facilities can be arranged.



Source: Behavioral and attitude study of domestic MICE travelers for Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau by Synovate Ltd. (2009)