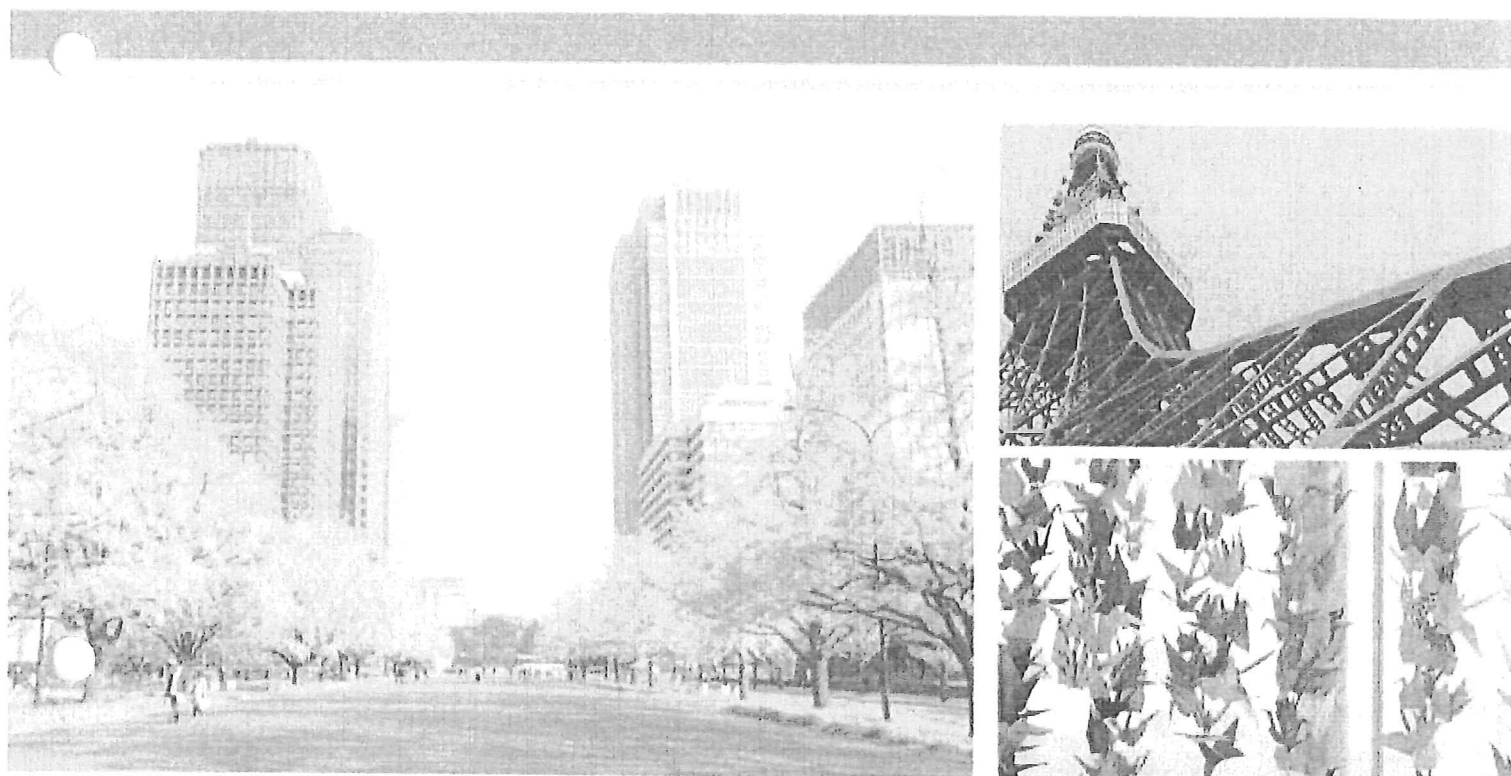


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TISSS-7616
Guidelines for Standardizing the Venues for MICE Industry in Thailand

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to; 1) study and determine the factors for standardizing the venues for MICE industry 2) study the attitude of service receivers for the standard venues elements for MICE industry 3) compare the standard venue elements for MICE industry 4) guideline recommendations for standardizing the venues for MICE industry. The research method used in this study was a qualitative research method integrating with a quantitative method for obtaining complete data. The structured interview was administered for 5 service providers who were the management of the venue and the questionnaire was completed by 255 representatives of organizers using the service obtained by purposive sampling. Results of the study revealed that most of the service users placed the highest importance of price, people (staff), place (distribution channel) and product/service. Besides, service users placed a high level of importance of the factor on physical environment, process of service, package and promotion. It was found that within four groups of the service users placed the importance of the standard venue elements they had significantly different perception in four aspects of attitudes standard elements venue for the MICE industry, including people/staff, physical evidence, process of service and promotion.

Based on component analysis, the guidelines for standardizing the venues for MICE industry include four major indicators and 49 minor ones, as follows: 1) people/staff 2) physical 3) process of service 4) promotion.

1. Introduction

In the past, activities conducted by various organizations such as conferences, tourism incentives, seminars and exhibitions or also known as "MICE" (Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition: MICE) was very popular in European regions as it is the location of many big multinational companies and international organizations. However, when considering the data from the Statistic Report 2002-2011 by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), it

reflected that the percentage of meetings held in the year 2003 concentrated in Europe alone was about 57 percent of the conferences worldwide. This trend gradually declined to around 54 percent in 2011, while the proportion figure of meetings held in Asia and the Middle East in the year 2003 takes up about 14 percent of the meetings worldwide. These conferences has a tendency to increase to about 17 percent by the year 2011.

For Thailand, MICE is one of the service businesses that has a major role in the economy of the country and are linked closely with the tourism industry according to the Office of Management Conference & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB.) (Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau: TCEB). Given that the income value of the MICE industry from foreign tourists in Thailand has grown by an average of 7 percent per year and the figure is estimated to increase by an average of 9 percent per year from international exhibitions and conferences as they are the divisions that has grown significantly in the past years. Although currently, Thailand has the capability to provide to MICE sufficiently however, the increasing number of events and foreign tourists in the future and the integration of the ASEAN economic community will bring more opportunities for the country in becoming the center, or to host of MICE organizers in the region. Therefore, it is crucial for institutions and entrepreneurs to prepare both the proactive and reactive strategies in the development of the infrastructure and enhance the service aspects to be more international and universalized.

For the venue, the key element of the MICE industry (Kaedsiri Jaroenwisan, 2009: 3), there is currently no clear standard requirements for its quality and services which may affect the reliance of service receivers in the MICE industry. Therefore, researchers are interested in studying the guidelines in standardizing venues which focuses specifically on the convention centers in southern of Thailand which is the Gateway to ASEAN which is an opening door for the MICE industry to rise the standard of the venues in the domestic towards international and regional level to support the demands in the ASEAN market. Hence, conferences are the type of venues that is capable of supporting large number of markets of all sorts at a full range of the MICE industry in both national and international level. In organizing conferences in an international level, it is known that the group of participants are tourists with quality that has 2-3 times higher spending potential than other ordinary tourists (National Information Center, 2013). Therefore, in order for this tactic to be beneficial to entrepreneurs, the public and private sectors for MICE industry can apply the standardized criteria and utilize it in gearing towards the same direction in

order to fully provide for large and international conferences as well as meeting the expectations of the government policy that wants to push the country to becoming the center of Asia's MICE industry.

2. Purpose

2.1 To study and determine the factors for standardizing the venues for MICE industry

2.2 To study the attitude of service receivers for the standard venues elements for MICE industry

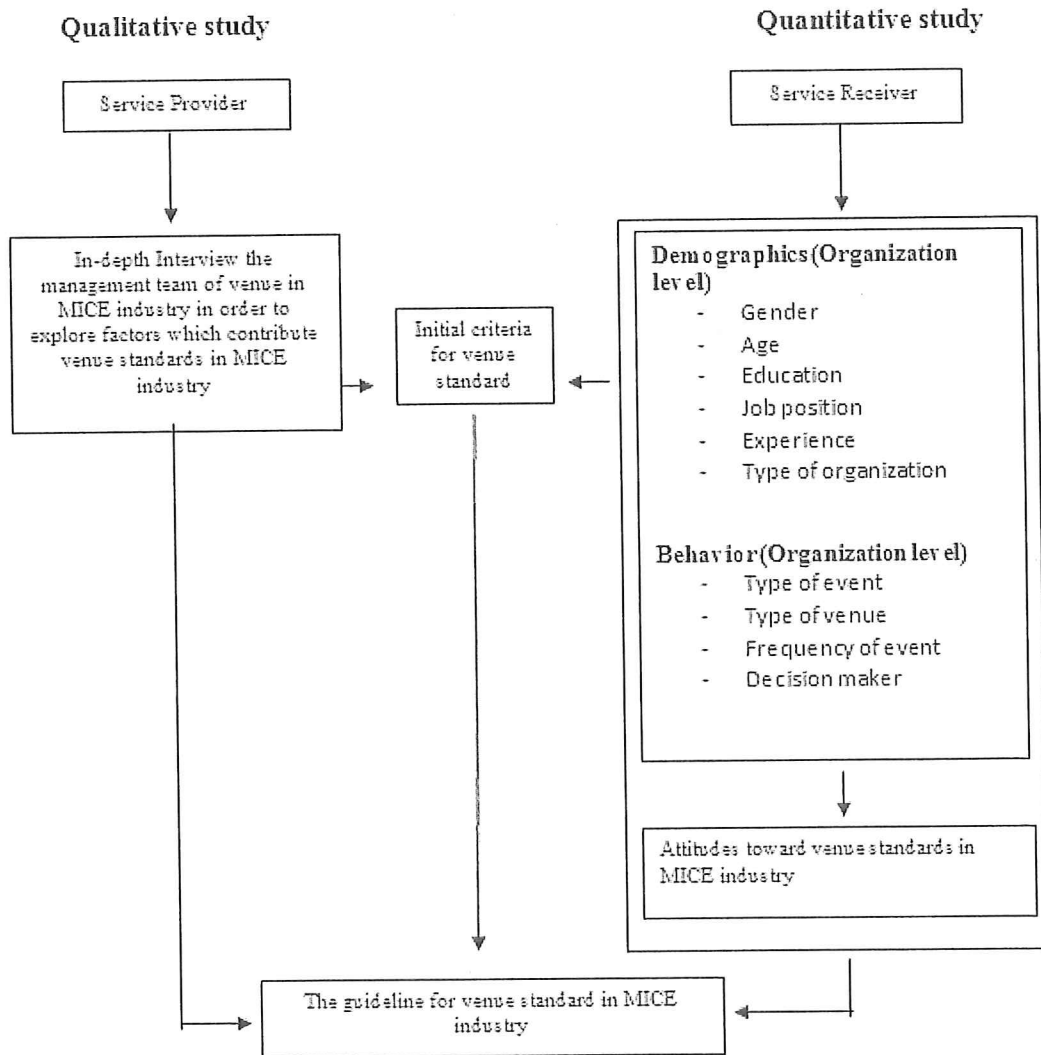
2.3 To compare the standard venue elements for MICE industry

2.4 To provide guideline recommendations for standardizing the venues for MICE industry

3. Theory Framework for Research and Result of Related Research

The researchers used the concept of quality service, attitude, and the marketing mix of the venues and the concept of standardizing MICE industry as the focus for studying the guidelines for standardizing the venues for MICE industry from the Theory of Consumer Economics (Kaedsiri Jaroenwisan, 2009: 12). It is recognized that consumers can be divided into two types: (1) the final consumer (2) industrial consumers which corresponded to Kotler's concept (2003: 216) that describes costumers behavior in the market and that in a market economy, there are two types of markets one being the consumer market and the other being the business market. Similarly, Sheth and Mittal's concept (2004: 12) also divides the market into a household market and a business market and that a market is an individual or an organization that wants to get a respond, has a capital to invest and are willing to make purchases (Etzel, Walker and Stanton, 2001: 662). And the potential customers must have a need or demand for products or services that are willing and able to exchange (McCarthy and Perreault, 2006: 575). Therefore, the market is comprised of individuals or organizations that have a need or demand, the money and power, and the willingness to make purchases. The organizations are not just making sells alone but also purchases raw materials, components, and services in high quantities. However, the success of the seminar will be determined based on the analysis of the service whether it met the expectations of the participants in the seminar or not and to what extend does the program of the similar brings out the interest of the participants. Furthermore, it was discovered that the facilities of the meeting in the form of products / services and services will appear in all of the marketing mix components for instance, a conference meeting place (venues), equipment and services. Therefore, the components of the marketing mix can be

applied to the study in terms of inferential statistics in order to predict the components of the venues in the next procedure as well. This research aimed towards the study of the venues as a conference within the hotels and not in the hotels. The researchers have taken the concept of the form the marketing mix of the venues model (Kaedsiri Jaroenwisan, 2552: 76-78) in which adopts the concept of tourism marketing mix, service marketing, MICE marketing, marketing in the venues and further study the details of the issues that has an influence on the selection of venues in the MICE business. The characteristics in each each areas of the marketing mix is evident that the MICE industry are closely linked and are part of the tourist industry and services. As the venues provides facilitation for the services for organizing MICE activities in the same manner as the business services with unique characteristics. Thus, the study of the quality of service, the behavior and attitude of tourists as well as the studies related to the international standard ISO MICE business applications to the concept of the marketing mix of the venues are used in order to determine the the guidance for standardizing the venues to provide entrepreneurs and executives, venue and use this as a guideline. The concept of standards for MICE includes four standards: (1) Standard for Food Safety (ISO 22000: Food Safety Standard) (2) Management of security for the MICE (TISI 22300: (MSMS.) MICE Security Management System) (3) Energy Management System Standard (ISO 50001: Energy Management Standard) and (4) the sustainable management of MICE (ISO 20121: Event Sustainability Management Standard). These intentionally acceptable standards will set guidelines for the standard venues for the MICE industry. The marketing mix (8Ps) will be used to determine the criteria for the standard venues. Based on Kaedsiri Jaroenwisan (2009) studies of the marketing model suitable venue for the MICE industry in Thailand. The configurable marketing mix of venues were categorized into eight aspects as follows: (1) products / services (2) price (3) distribution channels (place) (4) promotion (5) people (Staff) (6) Physical Evidence (7) process (service process) (8) Package. However, nowadays importance of the environmental factors have made a great impact and played a crucial role in setting the many standards. Thus, such a model can be compared with the environmental factors for the standard of MICE industry in order to acquire elements of a standard venue for the researching of guidelines in standardizing the venues for the MICE industry.



The conceptual framework flowchart

4. Procedures

4.1 Sample Groups

4.1.1 Service providers (the management of the venue) of a business partner of TCEB, with 5 sample groups divided into two subgroups: 1) Convention and Exhibition 2) in the hotel conference center (Convention Hotel).

4.1.2 Service Receivers (organizes MICE-related activities) such as the organizers or hosts and is the group that made the decision to select the venue.

The researcher has used the Purpose sampling by handing out the questionnaires according to the psychographic data into four subgroups (Hu and Hiemssta, 1996: 68) claimed (Kaedsiri Jaroenwisan, 2552: 85) such as: 1) hosts from companies, 2) hosts from institutions 3) hosts from the government and educational institutions 4) the representatives of the organizer or professional organizers. These sample of service receivers (organizers) has a total of 255 samples.

4.2 The Methods Used in the Study

In this study, the researchers used a structured in-depth interview to collect qualitative data for the service providers and a questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was conducted by the researchers from the concept study and related research, including the interviews of service providers. The closed-ended and open-ended questions in the questionnaire were for this data collection.

Researchers have examined the quality of the methods used in the study to achieve a quality questionnaire. By testing the accuracy of the content (Validity) by having experts review the contents on the clarity, language, and evaluate the structure of the questionnaire before the actual test of the questionnaire with the clients. Researchers have tested the reliability of the questionnaire by giving out 30 sets of questionnaires to the service receivers through Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient with the coefficient outcome of 0.97 which is considered an acceptable standard. Therefore, this questionnaire is ideal to be collected as data for the other samples.

4.3 Data Collection

The primary data collected by the researchers are as follows:

- 1) From the in-depth interviews, it can be drawn that those who were involved with the venue in the MICE industry are the providers of the venue.
- 2) From the answers of the closed-ended and open-ended in the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the service receivers are the people involved in organizing MICE events.

In the Secondary Data, the researcher have studied the concept of quality, service, attitude, behavior and marketing mix of venues. The concept of MICE industry as well as the standards related to the MICE industry was compiled from research papers, journals, pamphlets, books, thesis and researches related to both the domestic and foreign. The study also includes information from the Internet by the government and private intuitions.

4.4 Data Analysis

When the researchers collected the data and verified the correct information successfully, the questionnaire then went through the processing and coding and in order to calculate a statistical measurements used in the research. By using the SPSS program to analyze the data, the details are as follows:

4.4.1 Descriptive statistics analysis was used to enumerate the frequency, the percentage the average (Mean) and the standard deviation to describe the demographic data of the behavior of the service receivers in MICE industry.

4.4.2 Inferential statistics analysis was the one-way ANOVA with the use of the F-test for comparing between the two variables and more to consider differences between the service receivers' attitudes towards the importance of standards based on the venue for the MICE industry as a whole. The statistical significance is at the 0.05 level.

5. The Results

The study to propose guidelines for a standardized venue for the MICE industry have found that, most (60.40 percent) were female, and almost half (43.50 percent) are at the ages of 31-40 years old. Next to that is 27.30 percent that has the ages between 41-50 years old. Majority of the informant for 19.20 percent, has an age below or equal to 30 years old and 10.00 percent aged from 51 years and older. Respectively, over half of the respondents (65.10 percent) has the highest educational qualification of a Bachelor degree. Followed by a Master's degree 29.80 per cent and PhD 2.70 percent. The number of the respondents that has an educational degree below Bachelor degree were 2.40 percent.

In addition, almost half of the respondent (43.10 per cent) were positioned as managers, followed by Secretary Coordination of 21.20 percent, 11.30 percent were assistant managers, 5.10 percent and 4.30 is positioned as a scholar and president respectively. While other positions of 15.00 percent were of executive positions. As by half (50.00 percent) had the experience in taking responsibility for the event is between 1-5 years, followed by 33.00 per cent have experienced in taking responsibility for the event are between 6-10 years old, and only 17.00 percent were with the experience being in charge of the event for 11 years and over. For least experience in charge of organizing an event is of 1 year and the most is 20 years. The average of the experience of being in charge of organizing an event is 7 years.

Most organizations (61.20 per cent) chooses the venues in the hotel to hold the events while the other 34.50 percent chooses Convention Centers. The majority who chooses the venue at an organization (55.60 percent) mostly have a joint decision with the Board of Directors to make the final decision. Following that the percentage of 20.00 indicates that the president or head of organization alone makes the final decision. The organization has the final decision made by the head of the

organization varies accordingly. 1) The customers who hired organizations to make the final is 16.10 percent, 2) For the informant that were the representatives of the organizations to make the final decision (6.70 percent) and 3) for the project leader to make the final decision (1.60 percent).

The results of the purpose of this research number 1, for the and the determining factors for standardizing the venues for MICE industry have found that the service providers all had a mutual opinion that the factors for the creator includes eight areas. Products / Services, price, distribution channels (Place), promotion, staff (People / Staff), physical environment, Process of service and Package has all been contributed as a key in determining factor standardizing venue for the MICE industry.

The results of the purpose of this research number 2, the study the attitude of service receivers for the standard venues elements for MICE industry found that the informant have evaluated that the most important factors are the four factors such as product / service (mean score 4.22), pricing (mean score 4.37) , distribution channels (mean score 4.24) and the staff (mean score 4.25) . While promotion has a mean score of 4.10, on the physical environment (mean score 4.20), the service process (mean score 4.16) and the combination of products / services with the mean score 4.16.

The results of the purpose of this research number 3, compare the standard venue elements for MICE industry found that the service receivers are the organization of four subgroups: 1) Association 2) general companies 3) government and educational institutions, and 4) the professional organizers has attitudes towards the standard of the venues of the MICE industry in different significant of four factors: 1) the promotion, 2) physical environment, 3) process and 4) The staff

The results of the purpose of this research number 4, introduces guidelines for standardizing the venues for MICE industry found that, from the most to the least important features of the elements involving standardization of the venues are as follows 1) of staff (4.25), 2) the physical environment (4.20), 3) process Services (4.16), and 4) the promotion (4.10), chronologically.

6. Summary and Discussion

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the guidelines for setting a standard venue for the MICE industry are as follows: The informant has given the

importance to standardization of the elements and the selection of the venue for 49 elements within four factors:

The Staff

1. The staff is able to communicate in both Thai and foreign languages efficiently.
2. The staff are professional and capable of solving problems.
3. The importance of local culture can be seen through the service performed.
4. The staff is efficient in their performance
5. The staff are courteous and polite mannered
6. The staff has on appropriate attire
7. The staff has a good attitude and friendly.
8. The staff has a great posture and personality
9. The staff has the ability to coordinate with the relevant authorities in the event.
10. The staff has the willingness and the determination to work. (Passion for service).
11. The staff are attentive and willing to help.

Physical Environment

12. Venue and living areas clean and well maintained.
13. Direction signs and symbols are sufficient.
14. Venue and living room area has a great atmosphere and a suitable temperature
15. Facilities available in the service center
16. Tables / chairs, are adequate and in good working condition.
17. Have emergency lighting
18. Controlled air conditioning
19. Proper lighting system
20. Have materials and technologies that are environmentally friendly.
21. A label or a fire escape plan. Emergency exit sign
22. Efficient power control system
23. A first aid room service
24. A separate ventilators for areas where smoking is allowed.
25. A stylish meeting rooms
26. A fan in a room without air conditioning.
27. There is 24-hour security check.
28. Sprinkle with functional efficiency. In the proper position
29. Good ventilation system
30. Effective fire extinguisher and fire hose available.
31. There are parking spaces for the disabled.

32. There are walls to absorb sound from outside and inside the meeting rooms.
33. The design allows natural light to save energy.

The Service Processes

34. There are signs all over the place at the meeting.
35. The arrangement of apparatus that are suitable for eating.
36. The system eliminates odor of smoke from the kitchen or the lab.
37. Parking is available for the organizers with clear signs.
38. There's an elevator, wide and high enough to transport large equipment.
39. Respect of differences in race, religion, culture and practices equally to all ages and status.
40. An elevator for catering food specifically from the kitchen.
41. Waste management is effective.
42. Meals and drinks for the participants.
43. The event organizers can access the 24-hour to prepare in advance. Through the security system
44. Has an up-to-date electronic media service systems.
45. Facilities for the disabled of every type to use and access to the area

The Marketing Promotion

46. Promotional Conference and Exhibition taking into account the sustainable use of resources to achieve maximum benefit.
47. Plans saving / energy conservation and practicality.
48. The advance bookings are available.

7. Suggestions

The study of the guidelines set a standard venue for the MICE industry is a study in a form of survey to find patterns and elements of a standard format venues. However, this research is only the beginning and does not cover many other topics out there. Therefore, the researchers have made this suggestion for the next research study as follows:

7.1 Because this research was targeted on the service receivers at the MICE venue as a whole, therefore, sample size should be larger in number or go for national scale.

7.2 Because this research focuses mainly on the venue at the conference center and event venue in the hotel as a whole, the other types of venue should be studied more such as venues in the mall, the auditorium of the educational institutions, etc.

7.3 More studies should be conducted about the international standards that can be adapted with the guidelines set for venues in the MICE industry to reflect on the situation and changes in the economy, society and technology as well as customer requirements that may change.

7.4 In this study, the factors and features were analyzed quite a lot. It may be caused other important factors in determining the standard guidelines venue for the MICE industry to have a high tendency in distributing its importance. Therefore, in the study, if the researchers wants to cut some variables that are not as important, it may help to determined and clearly, more precisely the factors and features that are sensitive / appropriate to set a standard venue for the MICE industry.

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