MICE Destination Competitiveness and Air Transportation Facility – Thailand

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate attributes influencing MICE destination competitiveness of regional provinces of Thailand. Based on some common characteristics and differences by nature of location, Phitsanulok, Khon Kaen and Krabi were purposively selected. Research tool is a set of questionnaires consisting of three main parts that are demographic information, pairwise comparison of MICE city, and suggestion. Participants were 429 respondents from two main industries; aviation industry and the Meetings industry, as well as related stakeholders. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique to measure competitiveness of each MICE city. Also, the Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR) was applied to verify significant determinants affecting probability of each city to be selected as MICE destination. Findings revealed that seven factors influenced MICE destination competitiveness. These are: 1) international routes, 2) airport connectivity, 3) MICE experience, 4) accommodation, 5) innovation city 6) exhibition city, and 7) leisure city. However, the results show that each factor considerably provided different effects on each city. This study shed light on how the government and stakeholders can construct a strategic guideline to develop regional air transportation facility to their full potential and the city future growth.

Keywords: MICE destination competitiveness, air transportation facility, multinomial logistic regression

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ความสามารถในการแข่งขันของเมืองจุดหมายปลายทางไมซ์ และสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกด้านการขนส่งทางอากาศ – ประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อค้นหาคุณลักษณะที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความสามารถในการแข่งขันของจังหวัดต่างๆ ของประเทศไทยในการเป็นเมืองจุดหมายปลายทางไมซ์ พื้นที่ศึกษาคือจังหวัดพิษณุโลก ขอนแก่น และกระบี่โดยเป็นการเลือกอย่างเจาะจงในการศึกษาบนพื้นฐานความเหมือนและความแตกต่างด้านทำเลที่ตั้ง เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือแบบสอบถามซึ่งประกอบไปด้วย 3 ส่วนสำคัญ คือ ข้อมูลทั่วไปของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม การเปรียบเทียบคู่เมืองไมซ์ซิตี้และข้อเสนอแนะ ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามจำนวน 429 คนมาจากอุตสาหกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้อง คือ อุตสาหกรรมการบินและการจัดการประชุมรวมถึงผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียที่เกี่ยวข้อง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนาและเทคนิคกระบวนการลำดับชั้นเชิงวิเคราะห์เพื่อวัดความได้เปรียบทางการแข่งขันของแต่ละเมือง นอกจากนี้ มีการใช้การถดถอยโลจิสติกส์พหุกลุ่มเพื่อวิเคราะห์ตัวแปรที่ส่งผลต่อความเป็นไปได้ของเมืองในการได้รับเลือกให้เป็นเมืองจุดหมายปลายทางไมซ์ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความได้เปรียบทางการแข่งขันในการเป็นเมืองจุดหมายปลายทางไมซ์ประกอบด้วย 7 ปัจจัย คือ 1) เส้นทางบินระหว่างประเทศ 2) การเชื่อมต่อระหว่างท่าอากาศยานและตัวเมือง 3) ประสบการณ์การจัดงานไมซ์ 4) ที่พัก 5) เมืองแห่งนวัตกรรม 6) เมืองแห่งการจัดนิทรรศการ และ 7) เมืองแห่งการพักผ่อน อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าปัจจัยแต่ละตัวส่งผลกระทบต่อเมืองแต่ละเมืองแตกต่างกัน การวิจัยครั้งนี้เสนอแนวทางให้ภาครัฐและผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียทุกภาคส่วนสามารถร่วมกำหนดแนวทางกลยุทธ์เพื่อพัฒนาสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกด้านการขนส่งทางอากาศระดับภูมิภาคเพื่อให้เติบโตได้อย่างเต็มศักยภาพและสอดรับกับทิศทางการเติบโตของเมืองในอนาคต

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Introduction

In Thailand, the contribution of air transportation to tourism development are acknowledged in many studies, for instance, economic benefit (Waeoraweewong & Vor-Sittha, 2018), impact of Low Cost Carriers on tourism (LCCs) (Lai et al., 2019) and airport experience (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the main focus areas of study are mostly Bangkok or major cities like Chiang Mai, and Phuket. Articles and publications on regional and remote areas in secondary cities are still limited.

Furthermore, earlier works has concentrated primarily on evaluating transport as a mean to bridge visitors between origins and destinations. In fact, one of the most important factors motivating passengers to travel is the destination itself. However, deeper analysis of the relationship between the components of air transportation and destination is seldom illustrated.

Considering air transport as a contextual component of the tourism product of a destination, this paper investigates determinants affecting competitiveness of regional cities of Thailand in order to be selected as MICE destinations. The scope of study was intentionally selected relating to differences in their locations and similarity in their airport operations. These cities are Phitsanulok (PHS) in the North, Khon Kaen (KKC) in the Northeast and Krabi (KBV) in the South. The purpose of this study is to provide guideline to promote regional cities as MICE destinations as well as to leverage air transportation capability to facilitate the city growth.

Literature Review

Tourism and Air transportation

Defined by Neil Leiper, a leading tourism scholar, in 1979, tourism system was composed of five elements which were tourists, generating regions, transit routes, destination regions and a tourist industry (Hall & Page, 2010, p. 301). From this definition, it is obviously noted that transportation and tourism are naturally interconnected. Page and Ge (2009, p. 371) called it a symbiotic relationship: one cannot happen without the other. Not surprisingly, studies on interdependent relationship between transport and tourism have intensively been undertaken. Affirmed by Lumsdon (2000, p. 361), transport was essential for sustainable tourism as it was a crucial part of tourism system. The inextricable relationship between tourism and transport is meaningful and also have impact on each other. For example, the cost-efficiency of Low Cost Carriers (LCCs) leap up air travel demand and render some destination more attractive. On the contrary, choices of transport modes can also be affected by differences in destination geomorphology, tourist attractions, and seasonality of visits (Lohmann & Duval, 2014, p. 133).

Among all modes of transport, it is noted that air travel has been prominent mode for long distance travel for a long time. Nevertheless, the emergence of Low Cost Carriers (LCCs) recently increased significance of air transportation for short and medium routes (Graham et al., 2008, p. 1). As playing more vital role in tourism, interrelationship issues of aviation and tourism have been studied by numerous scholars such as critical issue in air transport and tourism (Duval, 2013; Spasojevic, Lohmann & Scott, 2017), perspectives and challenges for destinations, airlines and governments (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006), and impact of Low Cost Carriers on tourism industry and demand (Khan et al., 2018; Pulina & Cortés-Jiménez, 2010).

In regard to tourism, trips are however generated by different kind of purposes. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), classified tourism trip according to two main purposes; personal and, business and professional. Personal trip includes holiday, leisure and recreation, visiting friends and relatives, education and training, health and medical care, religion, shopping, transit, and other form of travel such as volunteer work and migration possibility. On the other hand, business and professional purposes refer to activity of attending meetings, conferences, trade fair and exhibitions, and other business and professional purposes (United Nations, 2010, p. 25). Business and professional trips are also known as “MICE tourism”, “business tourism” or “The Meetings industry”.

MICE Tourism and Site Selection

MICE Tourism has grown consecutively each year and contribute significant economic impact worldwide. Since 1963, the number of international meetings had increased approximately 10 % every year. During the period of 2013-2017, the growth rate had reached up to 29% (International Congress and Convention Association, 2018, p. 18). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) realized this crucial role of the Meetings industry as one of the key enablers of tourism development and generator of income and investment. As stated by the former UNWTO Secretary-General, Mr. Taleb Rifai, apart from business opportunity, the Meetings Industry also furnished benefits to the economy for a higher spending level, mitigate tourism seasonality, regenerate destinations and enhance social contribution by knowledge sharing and job employment (World Tourism Organization, 2014, p. 4).

The dynamic growth of the meetings industry considerably expanded and resulted in the establishment of authorities concerned such as Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB), Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), and specific professionals increasingly required. Not only related business and services were substantialized but also academic interest on the Meetings industry were conceptualized. Identical approach of convention modelling was firstly introduced by Var, Cesario and Mauser in 1985. At that time, accessibility was far more crucial than attractiveness for conference attendance (Var, Cesario & Mauser, 1985).

Crouch and Ritchie (1997) systematically summarized an intensive review of 64 articles and other publications on the Meetings Industry during 1976-1996. The study reflected that the main focus of research scholars during this period was to identify site selection factors. The findings advocated a conceptual model of site selection attributes. The eight primary determinants were comprised of 1) Accessibility (cost of travel, time of travel, frequency, convenience, barriers for travelers such travel formality like visas and customs) 2) Local support (local assistance of association, logistical and promotional support from Convention center, subsidies) 3) Extra conference opportunity (entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, recreation and professional opportunities) 4) Accommodation facilities (capacity, cost, service, security, availability) 5) Meeting facilities (venue capacity, layout and floor plan, cost, ambience, security, availability, services) 6) Information (MICE experience, destination reputation and marketing) 7) Site environment (climate, attractiveness of the destination's surroundings, suitability and standard of local infrastructure and local hospitality) 8) Other criteria (risk, profitability, association promotion, novelty attributes). In addition, a conceptual model of the site selection process was also developed composing of three steps: 1) convention preplanning, 2) site selection analysis and recommendations, and 3) site selection decision. This study was remarkable and influential on later studies on MICE site selection.

The dynamic growth of the Meetings industry impacted worldwide as well as the peripheral country like Australia. Five major challenges to promote Australian MICE industry were proposed; cooperation among industry stakeholders, more government support, public and private infrastructure, improvement of service standard and training, and effective marketing effort (Dwyer & Mistilis, 1999, p. 97).

In Europe, Schütter (2010) studied success factors of Vienna as top international congress destination ranked by International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). The study found that Vienna's victory considerably depended on an effectiveness of Vienna Convention Bureau on marketing activities, a strong partnership of industry organizations, great choices of venues and excellent public transportation system, splendid image of musical, cultural, and historical city, Austrian scientists' influence on venue selection, a great role of Vienna medical sector, a strong support of government, and a home of important international organizations.

In line with the Vienna success, Falk and Hagsten (2018) studied the art of attracting international conferences to European cities by exploring attractiveness of 943 cities in Europe for the period of 2012 – 2016. They pointed out that cultural attractions (museum, world heritage site), knowledge intensity (quality of local university), attractive as allocation for international R&D and city size were important determinants for the probability of becoming a host city. On the other hand, to become a host city, they emphasized that infrastructure like airport nearby and sea border were significant factors.

In regard to trade fair, Hanover city in Germany is illustrated as this city is well known for its one of the world largest trade fair; the Hanover Messe. Situated in the Hanover Region, the city of Hanover is a capital of Lower Saxony of the north German federal state, representing as an economic and cultural centre of the region. Moreover, the region itself is also the transport node, a centricity of industries and a leading service location. Nonetheless, this place interestingly attracts not only business travellers but also many leisure and recreational travellers due to its great variety of tourist natural resources such as mountains and valley (Priebs, 2014, p. 101). For Hanover, the city success is based from its strategic location and natural resources.

Differently for Las Vegas, the city has turned itself to a popular trade show city of USA by its own unique man-made attractions. Las Vegas has been well-known as a sin city for a long period of time, it has however gradually transformed its business model from a gaming-centric city to entertainment and business travel destination. According to Jiang (2013), this adult entertainment oriented city had been turned to more tourist destination since 1999 and it still kept its reputation for eighteen consecutive years as the best destination for trade shows in the United States. The study stated that Chinese convention participants came more and more to Vegas for shows such as the world most influential Tech event; Consumer Electronic Show (CES), ASD Trade Show, and magic shows. Different types of entertainment, great dining experience for food lovers, luxurious shopping and city architectures had changed Las Vegas more distinguishable and attracted a large number of leisure tourists.

Similarly in Asia, many cities have been impacted by the aggressive global trend of business tourism. For instance, Singapore took advantages from its geographic location and modernization of its infrastructure and management as the top convention destination in Asia since 1982. Nevertheless, high cost country and a dearth of entertainments and cultural attractions were identified as weakness for MICE city competitiveness. To leverage its market positioning from regional to global market, Singapore attempted to develop transportation, hospitality, and human resources (Lew & Chang, 1999) .

In his comparative analysis between Singapore and Macau, Tan (2007) indicated eight important attributes in determining attractiveness of these two MICE sites. Scrutinized from industry expert in-depth interview, those attributes were 1) city safety and security 2) destination accessibility notably by air 3) MICE facilities including availability of meeting venues, hotels and food and beverage 4) quality of both tangible and intangible services especially qualified manpower with professional skills and experiences 5) cost 6) supportive environments such as political stability 7) city attractions and entertainments and 8) destination branding. The findings portrayed that Macau was more attractive as a MICE destination especially representing itself as Las Vegas of Asia. On the contrary, Singapore

attracted more for international MICE markets. Air accessibility of Singapore was found the biggest advantage over Macau apart from its business ecosystem, headquarter base of many multi-nationality enterprises and post-event business opportunity. However, high cost of Singapore distracted its attractiveness.

Likewise, Lam and Crossley (2014) conducted a comparison study on Las Vegas and Macao. Although these two adult-centric playground cities had many in differences, for instance, geographic location, history and culture, they both have successfully been diversified themselves to complete leisure destinations through their other offerings such as iconic architectures, entertainments, shopping, and events. However, one similar characteristic of these two cities was revealed. They offered decent transportation infrastructure; air and road. Macao was also reachable by ferry from Hong Kong and Zhuhai, China mainland. The study affirmed that airports had been crucial to the growth of both cities. Resulted from the increasing numbers of visitors, McCarran International Airport in Vegas had been expanded accordingly. On the other hand, the city development was also critical for the growth of airport too. Here was another example of interrelationship between air transport and city development.

In conclusion, destination attractiveness have been concentrated by scholars worldwide. Site criterion were drawn from many perspectives of industry concerns. Taking all these attributes into account, air transportation system seems to be one of the critical factors for MICE destination competitiveness.

MICE Tourism in Thailand

MICE tourism in Thailand is officially originated in 1984 by the establishment of "Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA)" through mutual cooperation of government and private sectors. However, this market did not seem much opportunity at that time. As expressed on its web site, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) was established as the government agency by the Royal Thai Government with the main task to promote and develop the business tourism sector in Thailand in 2002 when MICE industry offered economic challenges.

Since 2004, Thailand has gained steady revenue from the Meetings industry especially for international MICE travellers who spent more and more per trip. The Thai government consequently put extensive support and facilitate to develop MICE industry including a promotion of MICE venue standard, MICE professionals training and establishment of MICE organizations throughout the country.

The business event sector has considerably grown. In 2018, Thailand was ranked 21st in the worldwide country ranking considering the number of meetings per country and Bangkok was ranked 10th city according to number of meetings per city (International Congress

and Convention Association 2019, 26). Thailand generated over THB 200,000 million from welcoming 30 million international and domestic attendees (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau [TCEB], 2018, 1).

As foreseeing the substantial growth and impact of MICE industry toward country, the five-year MICE industry's Master Plan (2017-2021) had been announced and five strategies had been proposed. The first one is to develop new MICE event to support target industries as well as build MICE events according to market demand and national policy. The ten targeted industries of Thailand 4.0 policy or S-curve industries are composed of two board categories. The first five S-Curve industries was aimed to enhance competitiveness of Thailand current strengths through innovation, which are Next Generation Automotive, Intelligent Electronic, Advanced Agriculture and Biotechnology, Food Processing and Tourism. The five new S-Curve industries are Digital, Robotic and Automation, Aviation and Logistics, Biofuels and Biochemicals and Medical hub. The TCEB second strategy is to distribute income to regions by upgrading regional MICE activities to stimulate provincial economy and decrease inequality in provincial areas. Since then along with the sector development, five MICE cities have been consecutively announced which are Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, Pattaya and Khon Kaen (TCEB, 2018).

In order to promote more MICE city, TCEB has set criterion to evaluate level of city competency. The eight criteria were grounded on a site selection model of Crouch and Ritchie in 1997 with minor adaption into current environment. The TCEB MICE city determinants are 1) accessibility (travel cost and time, flight frequency, convenience and linkage), 2) local supports (government, local chapter and personnel efficiency), 3) MICE products and opportunity (tourist attraction, recreation, shopping and entertainment, 4) accommodation facilities (hotel variety, facility, cost, and services), 5) MICE facilities (venue variety and capacity, cost, ambiance, services and experience), 6) city branding (marketing activities), 7) city environment (climate and hospitality), and 8) city safety (risks and security). With an aim to encourage regional MICE activities, more regional cities of Thailand are evaluated for their competency as MICE city. Subsequently, the research questions are raised; "what determinants influence competitiveness of a destination in order to be a MICE destination?" and "How air transportation can facilitate the MICE city's growth?".

Based on the TCEB MICE city criteria, attributes on air accessibility was consequently expanded in this study to distinguish air transportation role in destination competitiveness. Thus, air travel accessibility like international routes, and airport-city connectivity were added for need assessment. Other domestic forms of travel such as inter-city and intra-city transportation were also included to complete intermodal transportation network. In addition, some particular attributes on S-Curve industries (Health Care city, Agriculture city, Innovation city, Tourism city) and "M-I-C-E" city were joined to differentiate city positioning. Based upon

differences of city characteristics and resources, each city might face different challenges and constraints for city development. The findings of this study would therefore be beneficial for each city to grow into their own potential by differentiating their uniqueness from their own resources, and offering their MICE tourism products to appropriate market segments. The significant attributes identified in this study might be a fruitful guideline for MICE destination development as well as regional air transportation implementation in Thailand.

Methodology

Scope of the Study

Three provinces are purposively selected as areas of study; Phitsanulok, Krabi, and Khon Kaen. These cities have some similarity and various differences in many aspects in terms of tourism, air transportation, and MICE industry. For tourism aspects, three cities are located in different geography; mountainous, coastal, and plateau areas, resulting in different tourist resources. In regard to MICE city, Khon Kaen was the only city that officially nominated as one of Thailand MICE cities apart from Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya while Phitsanulok and Krabi are designated as cities for MICE regional activities. One common characteristic shared by these three cities are their airport operations: they are stated-own airports under supervision of Department of Airport (DOA), Thailand.

Firstly, Phitsanulok, located in the lower part of the North of Thailand, covers an area of 10,815 square kilometres with flatlands, mountainous landscape and richness of natural tourist attractions such as waterfalls and national park. Due to the strategic location, the city is a hub of trade, education and logistics of this region. Phitsanulok is also full of historical sites of ancient city resulting from being a capital city during Ayutthaya period. A must thing to do when visiting Phitsanulok is to worship Phra Buddha Chinnarat, the most beautiful Buddha statue of Thailand. As a node of air transportation, Phitsanulok Airport (IATA code: PHS), is situated three kilometres in the south of the city downtown. The airport covers 26,050 square metres with one runway and one passenger terminal, serving 24 flights with 8,000 passenger capacity per day (Department of Airport, 2019). Phitsanulok - Don Mueang International Airport, Bangkok is the only one route provided. Thus, all operating airlines are Low Cost Carriers (LCCs). From MICE perspective, the strength of Phitsanulok is geographical advantage. The city location connects the North, central and North-eastern parts of country. This makes Phitsanulok more accessible within two hours from surrounding provinces and about 50 minutes by air from Bangkok. In regard to MICE industry, the city strategically planned to be MICE Hub for the Lower-Northern Region and declared clearly on Phitsanulok Master Plan 2020-2039. Promoting MICE activities is one of tools to develop and leverage competitive advantages for economic, trade, and tourism of the city. Under the “MICE industry Project”, King Naresuan the Great International Convention and Exhibition Centre is under expansion for elevating capacity from 3,500 up to 5,000 participants (Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning, 2019). Furthermore, the numbers of MICE travellers are expected to be increased from both domestic and international markets according to The Office of Phitsanulok Province (2020). Along with the MICE city plan, transport infrastructure like Phitsanulok airport was lined up for feasibility study to be upgraded to international airport for better connectivity (Puvaneswary, 2020).

Secondly, Krabi is a southern province lying on Andaman coast of Thailand offering splendid scenery of both inland and offshore. Covered with jungle and limestone cliffs, the city attracts visitors with a wide array of outstanding beauty of natural sites and leisure activities such as sea coast, caves, waterfalls, hot spring, rock climbing, jungle trekking and islets such as Poda, Phi Phi and Lanta islands. Accommodations and restaurants are on services with variety of choices. For air transport, Krabi International Airport (IATA code: KBV) is situated about 15 minutes far from the city center. The airport is composed of one runway and two passenger terminals on 16,000 square meters of area with capacity of 12,000 passengers and 32 flights per day (Department of Airport, 2018b). As international airport, flights operated to Krabi are worldwide from Europe, Middle-East, China and Southern part of Asia. Airlines offer regular, seasonal and charter flights throughout a year. These airlines include both Full Service Carriers (FSCs) and Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs). The airport is currently leveraging its capacity by constructing new passenger terminal and new runway. This expansion will enhance airport capacity up to 8 million passengers per year. Relating to Mice industry, although Krabi was not an official MICE city, the city was also a part of TCEB strategic "D-MICE: Meeting in Thailand" campaign since 2015 aiming to enhance capabilities of MICE city in the Andaman cluster cities (Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Ranong and Trang).

And lastly, Khon Kaen province is situated in the Northeast of Thailand as a hub of trade and investment, politic, education and tourism. The city is very famous for its historical and archaeological sites, culture and local wisdom. The province is a home of Khon Kaen University, one of Thai accredited universities, offering Sciences and Technology, Health Sciences, and Social Sciences. The city is also a part of East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) route which is an investment, and logistic hub connecting countries in the Mekong sub-region; China, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar. Moreover, Mudmee silk, a hand delicate woven silk product, brings a lot of popularity to the city and lead the city to host the International Silk Festival for many years. As for Khon Kaen Airport, it is 8 kilometres far from the city with one runway and one passenger terminal. The airport is under development project for a new passenger terminal in order to maximize capacity up to 5 million passengers per year (Department of Airport, 2018a). The airport currently provides only domestic flights to major cities like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Utapao, Pattaya. Concerning the Meetings industry, Khon Kaen was officially appointed as the 5th Thailand MICE City by Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) in 2014. Fully equipped with conference facilities, the Kanchanapisek Multipurpose Convention Centre is located in Khon Kaen University. The center provides a total usable area of 21,160 square meters offering convention hall room, multipurpose hall, and outdoor areas for exhibition activities (Golden Jubilee Convention Hall, 2019). Moreover, MICE capability of the city has been fostered by the establishment of Khon Kaen International Exhibition and Convention Centre (KICE) in 2017. Apart from this, numerous five-star hotels in Khon Kaen also play important role in hosting various business events. The city has experienced in organizing national and international MICE activities in various fields such as the 14th APEC Khon Kaen International Conference 2019, The World Tourism Day 2016 (field trip) and the 11th International Asian Conference on Cancer Screening. As stated in the provincial development strategy 2018-2021 to be "a pleasant city that is becoming an ASEAN Metropolis", the city development has been intensively in the pipeline including the transportation supply chain such as double-track railway expansion and Light Rail Transit (LRT) project. However, previous researches revealed that air transportation is still

insufficient in some aspects. A lack of international flight network was mentioned as well as the intra-city connectivity problem (Saenjai & Mongkolsrisawat, 2015, p. 65).

Data Collection

Research Tool and Design

The questionnaire was designed to address the research objective that was identifying significant determinants of MICE destination competitiveness. The questionnaire consisted of three sections; 1) demographic data of the respondents, 2) MICE city attribute comparison, and 3) suggestions for MICE city development. In section 2 of the survey, the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) was employed in form of pairwise comparison table through 20 MICE city factors scrutinized from MICE destination and site selection literature reviews aforementioned.

After five judgements of the expert review, the pilot study was conducted. The 40 respondents were requested to fulfil the quality of the questionnaire. Certain amendments had been made after the pilot study for clearer instructions of the questionnaire.

Research Population and sampling method

Key players in the aviation and MICE industries were selected as population of this research. The aviation segments included Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), airport and airline employees from the areas of study as well as from other cities in order to avoid local bias. For MICE industry, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), hotels and accommodation, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), academia, and other related service business were involved. The stakeholders from two main industries were intentionally recruited in order to attain insight perspectives. These two perspectives might reflect challenges and limitations of each other and mutual development of reginal air transports and cities might be eventually guided accordingly.

Purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit MICE and aviation stakeholders. A snowball technique was also used for gaining insights information of field experts and provincial authorities.

The survey was started in November 2019 – April 2020 through in-person appointment, telephone calls, and post mail. The total of 429 participants completed the questionnaire. The sample size met requirement. El-Habil (2012) referred to guideline of Hosmer and Lemeshow that the minimum number of observation for each explanatory variable was 10 and a variable ratio 20 to 1 predictor was ideally recommended. Thus, the collected data set consisting of 20 variables with 429 valid cases is sufficient enough to accurately estimate parameters of this study

Data Analysis

To achieve the research objectives, some techniques are utilized including descriptive statistics, Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Multinomial Logistics Regression (MLR). Frequency and percentage were used to describe demographic information of respondents.

Analytical Hierarchy Process (one stage) helped measuring competitive advantage of 3 cities by pairwise comparison. Based on relative measurement approach, the AHP emphasizes on proportional measurement rather than exact measurement. In performing pairwise comparison, a comparison matrix of three cities were created to reflect relative priority in each of the compared cities. The numeric judgement ranking from equal (1) to extreme advantage (9) were transposed to the relative ratio scale in a pairwise comparison reciprocal matrix of judgements.

By normalized column method, a priority vector of each judgement was derived from firstly summing over the row and then averaging over each row. With the normalized matrix, the overall weights of each city (YPHS, YKKC, and YKBV) were obtained. Then, the Consistency Ratio (CR) were verified by calculating and comparing with the Consistency Index (CI). Only consistency ratio (CR) that met requirement of 0.10 or less were employed for next analysis. By applying AHP technique, probability of each MICE destination is indirectly estimated from pairwise comparison by respondents. The independent variables are proxied with the respondent-specific correlation between the factor scores and the MICE City preference. All AHP result were carried out by the Excel software package.

Then, correlation between the overall weights of each Mice city and 20 dependent variables were computed and the output were used for Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis.

Finally, the determinants of each MICE city were detected and identified by multinomial logistic regression analysis. First, basic assumption of regression was tested including the multicollinearity. Next, the stepwise regression analytical approach is performed in order to find a set of explanatory variables influencing probability of MICE destination of three provinces. As declared by Hosmer, Lemeshow, and Sturdivant (2013), stepwise selection procedure was a fast and effective tool to minimize a large number of variables, and to fit a number of logistic regression equations simultaneously. The multinomial model is applied in this study at the final stage of data analysis.

To estimate a multinomial model with *K* categories, the K-1 linear equation is estimated. In this research, the expected outcomes have three categories, so two linear equations were estimated. The first is the probability of Krabi (KBV) to be selected as a MICE destination opposed to Phitsanulok (PHS). The second is the probability of Khon Kaen (KKC) to be MICE destination compared to Phitsanulok (PHS). After running all pairwise, the negative

numbers of coefficients of PHS were likely to fall in reference category. Thus, to identify the parameters, two prediction equations are formed with PHS reference as follows:

The first model for the log odds of comparing Krabi VS Phitsanulok

$$\log\left(\frac{KBV}{PHS}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_{1X1} + \beta_{2X2} + \beta_{3X3} + \ldots + \beta_{nXn} \quad (1)$$

The second model for the log odds of comparing Khon Kaen VS. Phitsanulok

$$\log\left(\frac{KKC}{PHS}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_{1X1} + \beta_{2X2} + \beta_{3X3} + \ldots + \beta_{nXn} \quad (2)$$

Data were analyzed with 95% confidence interval.

As previously mentioned in the literature review section on determinants of site selection, research variables of the study are denoted as follow:

Table 1 Variables Coding

No.	Variables	Types	Measurement	Definition
1	lnKBV/PHS	Dependent	log-odd	Probability of Krabi as a MICE city compared to Phitsanulok
2	lnKKC/PHS	Dependent	log-odd	Probability of Khon Kaen as a MICE city compared to Phitsanulok
3	InterRoute	Independent	Correlation label/1*	International Route
4	AirportLink	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Airport Linkage
5	InterCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Inter-city transportation by air, road, rail
6	IntraCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Intra-city transportation
7	LocalSupport	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Local support from public and private sectors
8	MICEExp	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Professionals MICE experience of personnel, level of event host (provincial, national, international), MICE marketing and promotion

9	MICEVenue	Independent	Correlation label/1*	MICE venue; location, cost, communication infrastructure, services, safety, environmental policy
10	Accom	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Accommodation; hotel standard, room rate, accessibility, safety, environmental policy
11	MICEProg	Independent	Correlation label/1*	MICE program and extra opportunity during visit; keynote speakers, business network, leisure trip

Note: *label/1 = observation–specific correlation between its AHP weights and MICE preference

Table 1 (continued) Variables Coding

No.	Variables	Types	Measurement	Definition
12	CityImage	Independent	Correlation label/1*	City Image; tourism sites (historical, natural, cultural, nightlife), local food, hospitality, green city
13	Safety	Independent	Correlation label/1*	City Safety; road safety, risk from disaster or protest, safety and security standard, medical standard
14	HealthSci	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a host of health science event
15	AgroCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a host of agriculture event
16	InnoCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a host of innovation and technology event
17	TourismCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a host of tourism and culture event
18	MeetingCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a meeting city
19	IncentiveCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as an incentive city
20	ConventionCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a convention city

21	ExhibitionCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as an exhibition city
22	LeisureCity	Independent	Correlation label/1*	Suitability of city as a leisure city

Note: *label/1 = observation–specific correlation between its AHP weights and MICE preference

Results and Discussion

The total of complete questionnaire was 429. Results of the study revealed that there were seven attributes influencing MICE regional destinations in Thailand. The findings were presented step by step as discussed below:

Respondent Demographic Profile

The results show that the majority of respondents were female (54.30%) at the range of age between 21-30 years old (45.00%). Almost half (42.70%) of the respondents worked in Bangkok metropolitan area while the other half are from the areas of study: Phitsanulok, Krabi and Khon Kaen. Few were from southern and northern parts of Thailand. Half of them worked for private sector (51.00%) in airline business (46.20%). In accordance with their age, about half of samples had 1-5 years of working experience (53.85%) and took position of operations (76.20%). Almost all of them had visited one of these 3 cities (90.20%). The results of the respondent demographic data were illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Respondent Demographic Profile

Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	196	45.7
Female	233	54.3
Total	429	100
Age		
21-30	193	45.0
31-40	146	34.0
41-50	63	14.7
51-60	25	5.8
Above 60	2	0.5
Total	**429**	**100**
Working province		
Phitsanulok	56	13.1
Krabi	59	13.8
Khon Kaen	56	13.1
Bangkok	183	42.7
Chiang Mai	4	0.9
Chiang Rai	19	4.4

Category	Frequency	Percent
Trang	12	2.8
Phuket	30	7.0
Hatyai	10	2.3
Total	**429**	**100**
Organization type		
Government/State Enterprise	190	44.3
Private organization	219	51.0
Public Organization	20	4.7
Total	**429**	**100**
Business type		
Academia	26	6.1
Airports	96	22.4
Airlines	198	46.2
Other transportation	23	5.4
MICE venue	2	0.5
Travel Agency	14	3.3
Hotel & Accommodation	27	6.3
Related services	28	6.5
MICE participants	15	3.5
Total	**429**	**100**
Working experience		
1-5 years	231	53.85
6-10 years	92	21.45
11-15 years	34	7.93
16-20 years	31	7.23
21-25 years	23	5.36
26-30 years	12	2.80
Above 30 years	6	1.40
Total	**429**	**100**
Position		
Executive	43	10
Manager	59	13.8
Operations	327	76.2
Total	**429**	**100**
Visiting experience		
Visited	387	90.2
Never	42	9.8
Total	**429**	**100**

Logistic Regression Analysis

The findings of stepwise regression analysis are illustrated in table 3 and 4 identifying determinants influencing Krabi and Khon Kaen MICE destinations respectively.

Table 3 Stepwise Regression Results of Krabi as MICE city comparing to Phitsanulok

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	*t*	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.096	0.073		1.314	0.190		
R14 Innovation city	0.230	0.067	0.170	3.456	0.001	0.879	1.138
R2 Airport Link	0.242	0.074	0.154	3.257	0.001	0.947	1.056

R6 MICE experience	0.217	0.084	0.128	2.582	0.010	0.861	1.161

Note: The dependent variable was probability of Krabi to be selected as MICE city comparing to Phitsanulok R^2= 0.100, Adjusted R^2 = 0.094, F-test = 15.751, Observations = 429

The F-value of 15.751 (p-value = .000, less than level of significance of .05) was statistically significant, suggesting that there was a statistically relationship between probability of Krabi MICE city and 20 explanatory variables. The 3 significant factors affecting probability of Krabi MICE city were innovation city, airport linkage and MICE experience. The coefficient signs in Eq. (3) indicated direction of the relationship between explanatory variables and dependent variable; positive or negative (Schober, Boer and Schwarte, 2018, p. 1763). Positive coefficients implied that these three independent variables favored Krabi to be MICE destination over Phitsanulok. The adjusted R2 value was 0.094 meaning that almost 10% of the probability of Krabi Mice city was explained by three predictors.

Log Odds of Krabi/Phitsanulok as MICE city

= 0.096 + 0.230 (Innovation City) + 0.242 (Airport Link) + 0.217 (MICE experience)
(0.073)* (0.067)* (0.074)* (0.084)*
(0.170)** (0.154)** (0.128)** (3)

R^2= 0.100, Adjusted R^2 = 0.094, *F*-test = 15.751, Observations = 429

* Standard Errors in parentheses

** Standardized Coefficient in parentheses

The standardized values implied level of importance of each three factors. The findings revealed that the city should pay attention firstly to city innovation (Beta = 0.170), airport-city connectivity (Beta = 0.154) and MICE experience (Beta = 0.128) respectively.

Regarding Khon Kaen, a set of determinants influencing the probability of Khon Kaen MICE destination are depicted in the table 4 below:

Table 4 Stepwise Regression Results of Khon Kaen as MICE city comparing to Phitsanulok

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficient**		**Standardized Coefficient**	***t***	**Sig.**	**Collinearity Statistics**	
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Tolerance**	**VIF**
(Constant)	-0.078	0.083		-0.946	0.345		
R1 Inter Route	0.307	0.093	0.161	3.315	0.001	0.772	1.295
R20 Leisure city	0.281	0.068	0.188	4.128	0.000	0.881	1.135
R19 Exhibit city	0.197	0.067	0.132	2.923	0.004	0.904	1.106
R2 Airport Link	0.263	0.081	0.155	3.227	0.001	0.792	1.263
R8 Accommodation	0.226	0.086	0.123	2.641	0.009	0.850	1.177

Note: The dependent variable was probability of Khon Kaen to be selected as MICE city comparing to Phitsanulok. R^2= 0.226, Adjusted R^2 = 0.217, F-test = 24.666, Observations = 429

The F-test value of 24.666 represented the statistically significant relationship between dependent and independent variables (p-value = 0.000, less than level of significance of 0.05). This developed model was significant (p = 0.000) and could explain Khon Kaen MICE city 22%

variability in the model. Positive coefficients in the model implied that the independent variables favored Khon Kaen over Phitsanulok. Thus, five predictors; international route, leisure city, exhibition city, airport linkage, and accommodation made Khon Kaen more attractive than Phitsanulok.

The standardized values revealed level of importance of each five factors for Khon Kaen. The findings indicated that the city should pay attention firstly to leisure city (Beta = 0.188), international route (Beta = 0.161), airport-city connectivity (Beta = 0.155), exhibition city (Beta = 0.132), and accommodation (Beta = 0.123) respectively.

The Average Marginal Effects (AMEs)

In general, linear regression, the estimated coefficient was directly interpretable as the predicted change in dependent variable (Y) given a unit change in independent variable (X), holding all other variables constant. Differently, the coefficient of logistic regression indicates only whether an explanatory variable result in positive or negative way of a variable outcome guided by the coefficient signs. To access the strength of causal relationship between explanatory variable on variable outcome in logistic regression, the marginal effect must be measured. The percentage on how much probability of an event (Y) would change when explanatory variable (X) increases or decreases by one unit will be reflected by the marginal effect values.

Leeper (2017) proposed in his study that the Average Marginal Effects (AMEs) was a unified and intuitive way to calculate marginal effect of each variable at every observed value of X and average across the resulting effect estimates.

Table 5 Logit average marginal effects of significant attributes of three MICE destinations

No.	Significant Attributes	Logit average marginal effects		
		KBV	KKC	PHS
1	R1 International Route	-0.048	0.064	-0.015
2	R2 Airport Linkage	0.016	0.017	-0.033
3	R6 MICE Experience	0.052	-0.034	-0.017
4	R8 Accommodation	-0.036	0.047	-0.011
5	R14 Innovation City	0.055	-0.036	-0.018
6	R19 Exhibition City	-0.031	0.041	-0.010
7	R20 Leisure City	-0.044	0.059	-0.015

Based upon findings in table 3 and 4, it can be generated that seven variables illustrated in table 5 were significant for probability of the three cities to be selected as MICE destination. These determinants are: 1) international route, 2) airport linkage, 3) MICE experience, 4) accommodation, 5) innovation city, 6) exhibition city, and 7) leisure city.

Firstly, regarding international route, the marginal effects of three cities shows that Khon Kaen is the city to where international routes should essentially be operated compared to Krabi and Phitsanulok. The marginal effect of 0.064 indicates that if there is an increase in international route by one unit, Khon Kaen will be more likely to be selected as MICE destination at 6.40%. This research findings were consistent and in agreement with the study of Sanjai and Mongkolsrisawat (2015). From perspectives of key informants of Khon Kaen local MICE industry stakeholders, the study showed that although the city was the center of the Northeast region and offered many multimodal transportations, the air travel was still limited with few domestic flights. Khon Kaen had hosted important international events. The city was also set as "MICE Destination of Asia". The international routes at least from neighbouring countries were considerably crucial to achieve the city goal. Łódź city in Poland was taken as example for better illustration. As a trade fair city with long history since 1925, MICE tourism development in Łódź was limited by low international flight availability. To improve competitiveness of Lodz on European MICE market, the urgent contribution was to establish and robust international flight connection (Sylla et al., 2015, p. 121). Contradiction to Krabi and Phisanulok, the marginal effects of both cities are in negative signs, guiding that any increase in international route will decrease probability of both cities as MICE city. These may be resulting from the fact that Krabi airport is currently international airport welcoming flights from many major cities worldwide as well as domestic flights. The airport offers participants more choices of direct flights while traveling to Khon Kaen needs a transit at Bangkok first. Regarding Phitsanulok, the city was positioned as regional MICE city for domestic market, so international connections might not be proper alternative at this time.

Secondly, as for airport-city linkage, the two cities that should improve their airport-city connectivity were Khon Kaen and Krabi. The marginal effect of Khon Kaen was 0.017, suggesting that the probability that Khon Kaen will be more likely to be MICE city will increase 1.7% if there is an increase in airport-city linkage an unit. As well as Krabi, the city will be more attractive and be selected as MICE site with 1.6% of probability if the airport-city connection is increased one unit. For Khon Kaen, this research finding was in accordance to the study of Tunming, Chaigasem, and Siriwong (2019) pointing out that intermodal connectivity between Khon Kaen airport and bus station was ineffective. As for Krabi, the distance between Krabi International Airport (KBV) and the city center is approximately 15 kilometres. In addition, most of tourist sites, hotel and accommodations are not located in town but mostly lie along coastline further far from the airport like Ao Nang (40 kilometres from airport) or sometimes

on islands such as Phi Phi and Lanta. Distance seems to be main obstacle for visitors. Besides, the city landscape with mountainous geography inevitably causes some difficulty for travelers who drive. The insufficient and ineffective airport connectivity then result in not only time cost but also budget and accidents. As mentioned by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016, p. 70) proper accessibility was elemental for overall competitiveness of destinations. Suitable infrastructure and adequate means of transportation and efficient operation were fundamentally required to facilitate tourist mobility with convenience, capacity, reliability, and connectivity. Seamless transport could enhance the quality of visitor satisfaction and experience.

The third significant attribute is MICE experience. The marginal effect indicates that among these three cities, Krabi should develop the city MICE experience in order to be MICE site because a unit increase in MICE experience development will increase 5.20% of probability of the city to be selected. Human resource capability had been identified as one of barriers of Thailand MICE industry. The problem of Thailand was insufficient number of professional and skilled staff at the management level. They further explained that the different level of MICE products and services between Bangkok and local service providers were identified as major problem. Bangkok staff were more capable with better understanding of MICE business, job responsibility, service delivery standards as well as language proficiency (Sangpikul & Kim, 2009, p. 198). The empirical evidence can also be found from the study of Boonchom & Pattanapairoj (2018) who demonstrated that the most crucial determinants affecting the readiness of Khon Kaen in preparation to be MICE City was professionalism of MICE personnel.

Mongkhonvanit & Chattiwong (2017) proposed a guideline for human resource development for Thailand MICE industry. The findings revealed that extra and specific training courses should have been provided to hotel personnel in order to enhance their competency and skill. The training modules should emphasize on language proficiency, MICE business trend, and service mind. Krabi can take Khon Kaen as example for this aspect.

The next significant factor is accommodation. The 0.047 marginal effect of Khon Kaen on accommodation criteria implicates that if accommodation of Khon Kaen is augmented in one unit, Khon Kaen is more likely to be MICE city at 4.7% of probability. Accommodation was also listed as key category of site selection by Crouch and Ritchie since 1998 as well as severally confirmed by many scholars (Sylla et al., 2015; Smagina, 2017). In particular, the availability of on-site and off-site accommodation was reported by Crouch and Louviere (2004) as one of the most critical factors for the convention site selection in Australian domestic convention industry. Khon Kaen has various choices of hotel and accommodation including five-star on-site accommodation such as Avani Khon Kaen Hotel & Convention Centre and Centara Khon Kaen Hotel & Convention Centre. The hotel business should extensively be boosted with intensive marketing effort on promoting city accommodation.

With regard to Innovation city, there is only a marginal effect of Krabi that is positive, implicating that this attribute would favour Krabi to be more attractive for site selection. With 0.055 marginal effect value, Krabi will increase probability to be selected at 5.5% if the innovative image of city is raised in one unit. In fact, Krabi has hosted top international conferences on innovation and technology for a period of time; for example, the International Conference on Innovation, Management and Industrial Engineering in 2015 welcoming up to 100 delegates, the International Conference on Advanced Technology Innovation (ICATI) in 2018 and the 2019 International Conference on Science, Innovation and Management (ICSIM). Tracing back to 2010, the innovation platform of ASEAN had took placed here in form of "Krabi Initiative". This initiative was formally served as ASEAN blueprint for Science, Technology and Innovation endorsed by 10-member countries. The initiative emphasized on 8 thematic areas: 1) ASEAN innovation for global market 2) Digital economy 3) Green technology 4) Food security 5) Energy security 6) Water resource management 7) Biodiversity for health and wealth (Irawan, 2017, p. 2). As a result, it is not surprising why Krabi was selected as Innovation and Technology platform. Hence, if the city would like to differentiate itself from other MICE cities, Krabi should foster this market segment and position the city as the Innovation city destination of Thailand.

The sixth one is exhibition city attribute. The positive sign of the marginal effect reflects a positive influence of this variable on Khon Kaen while the signs of the other two cities are oppositely presented. It means that among these three, Khon Kaen is more likely to be designated as MICE city with the probability of 4.10% if there is one-unit increase of exhibition city. Considering MICE city profile of Khon Kaen, it is found out that Khon Kaen is not far from its way to achieve this goal. The Khon Kaen International Convention and Exhibition Centre (KICE), established in December 2017, is a new versatile MICE venue with mega structure enabling 7,510 square metres for indoor and 4,680 square metres for outdoor. The main exhibition hall are designed for hosting all types of events ranging from heavy industrial exhibition to live music performance. In accordance with the national and provincial strategies, this research finding reaffirmed that Khon Kaen came on the right track and should continuously enhance its potential and competitive advantage for being "World class of Convention and Exhibition" destination.

The final significance for regional MICE city development is leisure city attribute. The marginal effect sign demonstrates that the city that will take the most advantages of this attribute is Khon Kaen. With marginal effect of 0.059, this implies that Khon Kaen will be more likely to be determined as MICE destination with the probability of 5.90% if the city can improve one-unit increase of this attribute. As for leisure aspect, previous studies on Khon Kaen MICE city had similarly reflected that the city was not successful in terms of tourism. Siribowonphitak, Pathumporn, and Esichaikul (2018) indicated that despite of variety of tourism resources, Khon Kaen attracted small number of tourists. In accordance to Chuaysook &

Kovathanakul (2015), tourist sites of Khon Kaen were unattractive, far and with limit of accessibility. Worsen by city traffic density, travel time, inconvenience and expensiveness of public transport, it was difficult for MICE participants to arrange their visits before and after MICE programs. As Crouch and Ritchie stated since 1998, accessibility and transportation facilities including air and local transportation were key factors for destination competitiveness. From the customers' perspective, the deficient management of leisure and recreational facilities were found negative influences for destination selection (Ortigueira & Gómez-Selemeneva, 2011, p. 210). For Khon Kaen, the MICE city image was increasingly admitted in both national and international market considering from the past prosperous events the city had hosted. The city may take this opportunity to convert involuntary first-time visitors or non-vacation visitors who came for business purposed or as "MICE participants" to return to the city as voluntary visitors for vacation purposes. Kerr, Lazarevski & Dolnicar (2009) agreed with a number of scholars that business and leisure travelers were actually the same person who spend extra time in business destination for relax or recreation. The new term "Bleisure" has commonly used to define this kind of travelers and it is noted that the bleisure trend was expanding (Lichy & McLeay, 2017, p. 517). Another point is the fact that the rebranding image of Khon Kaen as "Leisure city" would eventually benefit the city to capture attention of new market, a group of "I" (incentive). Resulting from that, Khon Kaen would enable to fully serve as regional MICE city by covering all segments of MICE industry.

In conclusion, the probability of each city to be designated as MICE destination are measured by the marginal effect value while the positive and negative signs were represented as indicators implying which variable was benefit or obstacle in developing MICE city attractiveness.

Conclusion

This research investigated the relationship between MICE destination competitiveness and regional air transportation facility. The three regional provinces were Phitsanulok, Krabi, and Khon Kaen. The questionnaire was employed to collect data, and data analysis used descriptive statistics, Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Multinomial Logistic Regression (MNLR). Seven significant attributes were identified in order to develop the cities as MICE destinations. These determinants were international route, airport-city connectivity, MICE experience, accommodation, innovation city, exhibition city and leisure city. However, with differences in characteristics and resources, each city had its own way to increase its attractiveness as MICE destination. The marginal effects clarify clearer view which determinants should be emphasized to enhance city and air transport development.

The findings revealed that for Krabi, the crucial determinants to increase probability to be selected as MICE destination were innovation city, MICE experience, and airport linkage. Next, as for Khon Kaen, the city needs to prioritize on implementing international routes,

strengthening image of leisure city by reforming tourism product, boosting hotel business, promoting exhibition events, and improving airport-city connectivity.

In summary, these attributes could be divided into three categories. The first category could be set as “MICE capability” including MICE experience. The second is categorized as “City positioning” composing of Incentive city, Exhibition city, and Leisure city. The last group was city infrastructure consisting of international route, airport connectivity, and accommodation. The result of this study provides new perspective for theoretical framework of MICE destinations competitiveness. Taking into account as a part of tourism product of a destination, air transportation was identified as a key factor for MICE site selection. The findings highlights the significant attributes of MICE destination competitiveness. Nevertheless, city development guideline was differently provided according to each city core competency and limitation. For managerial contribution, the implication of this study signifies how the government and stakeholders can construct a strategic guideline to develop regional air transportation facility to their full potential and the city future growth as MICE destination

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