

## Proposed Policy for Promoting Songkhla Province as an international Potential MICE Destination

### ข้อเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายเพื่อยกระดับจังหวัดสงขลาสู่การเป็นเมืองศักยภาพไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติ

#### Benjamaporn Chumnanchar

PhD Student in Integrated Tourism and Hospitality Management,  
Graduate School of Tourism Management

National Institute of Development Administration

#### เบญจมาภรณ์ ชำนาญฉา

นักศึกษาหลักสูตรปริญญาโทสหวิทยาการ สาขาการจัดการการท่องเที่ยว

สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

E-mail: chamnuncha@gmail.com, Ph: 063-549-6299

วันที่ได้รับต้นฉบับบทความ : 6 ตุลาคม 2565

วันที่แก้ไขปรับปรุงบทความ : 6 มีนาคม 2566

วันที่ตอบรับตีพิมพ์บทความ : 12 มีนาคม 2566

#### Dr. Patthareeya Lakpetch

Associate Professor of Graduate School of Tourism Management

Director of Research Bureau National Institute of Development Administration

National Institute of Development Administration

#### ดร. พัทธิยา หลักเพชร

รองศาสตราจารย์ประจำคณะการจัดการการท่องเที่ยว

ผู้อำนวยการสำนักวิจัย สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

E-mail: dr.patthareeya@yahoo.com, Ph: 02-727-3691

## Abstract

The objective of this research was to propose policy for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE destination. The research design was qualitative research as well as gathered all documents from research articles and academic articles and conducted to explore the perspectives of stakeholders in MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), industry in Songkhla Province. The in-depth interviews technique was used for thirteen key informants as well as the focus group technique was used for six to twelve key informants in order to collect the data from them. The data were used for analysis to drive the indicators of proposed policy for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE destination in terms of area-based, functional-based, and agenda-based elements. According to the research findings, the 5 recommended policies for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE destination includes the following: 1) promoting and elevating Songkhla to become an international MICE city; 2) improving the quality and standards of the progressive MICE event organization; 3) improve its image in terms of safety and hygiene; 4) integrate operations and collaborations with tourism and MICE network; and 5) strengthen the competitiveness in the international MICE industry. Moreover, this study will be the guideline for other provinces to use them as basic information to drive policy for promoting their own provinces to become international potential MICE destination in the future.

**Keywords:** MICE Industry, Policy, Potential MICE destination

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อให้ข้อเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายเพื่อยกระดับจังหวัดสงขลาสู่การเป็นเมืองศักยภาพไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติ งานวิจัยนี้เป็นงานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ ด้วยการทบทวนข้อมูลจากบทความวิจัยและบทความวิชาการ และใช้การเก็บข้อมูลจากกลุ่มผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์ (การจัดประชุม การท่องเที่ยวเพื่อเป็นรางวัล การประชุมนานาชาติ และการจัดนิทรรศการ) จังหวัดสงขลา ด้วยการเก็บข้อมูลภาคสนามจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลด้วยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกจำนวน 13 คน และการสนทนาแบบกลุ่มย่อย 6-13 คน ใช้เป็นข้อมูลในการวิเคราะห์เพื่อการพัฒนาเป็นตัวชี้วัดเชิงนโยบาย ยกระดับจังหวัดสงขลาสู่การเป็นเมืองศักยภาพไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติที่ประกอบด้วยองค์ประกอบ ด้านพื้นที่ ด้านความร่วมมือ และด้านเป้าหมายการพัฒนา จากผลการศึกษาพบว่าข้อเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายเพื่อยกระดับจังหวัดสงขลาสู่การเป็นเมืองศักยภาพไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติ ประกอบด้วย 5 นโยบายหลักๆ ได้แก่ (1) การผลักดันและยกระดับศักยภาพให้จังหวัดสงขลาเป็นเมืองไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติ (2) การยกระดับคุณภาพและมาตรฐานการจัดงานไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติอย่างเป็นระบบ (3) การส่งเสริมภาพลักษณ์ทางด้านความปลอดภัยและสุขอนามัย (4) การบูรณาการการทำงานและการสร้างความร่วมมือของภาคีเครือข่ายทางด้านอุตสาหกรรมท่องเที่ยวและอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์ และ (5) การเพิ่มขีดความสามารถด้านการแข่งขันของอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์ระดับนานาชาติ การศึกษานี้สามารถเป็นแนวทางให้จังหวัดอื่น ๆ ที่มีการส่งเสริมอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์ ใช้เป็นพื้นฐานข้อมูลผลักดันจังหวัดสู่การเป็นอุตสาหกรรมไมซ์ที่มีคุณภาพในโอกาสต่อไป

**คำสำคัญ:** อุตสาหกรรมไมซ์, นโยบาย, เมืองศักยภาพไมซ์

## Introduction

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau has promoted and developed MICE cities in Thailand. The goal of MICE city development is to make Thailand cities as a preferred destination for international MICE. MICE Thailand cities may expand the country's MICE industry by implanting comprehensive projects to drive the MICE industry, making it more competitive. Bangkok, Phuket, Chonburi, Chiang Mai, and Khon Kaen Province are Thailand's MICE cities. They aim to enhance the quality of service in their nation's MICE industry and expand the MICE market (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2014).

However, Thailand is trying to promote its MICE cities, namely, Phuket, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Pattaya, and Bangkok, which are also the country's leading tourist destinations. These cities are considered to be trapped in a middle income, such that even though they are Thailand's leading tourist destinations, they cannot create much value from tourism. Although some cities have many world-famous five-star hotels and restaurants where people come to stay, they remain to have low-value tourism activities compared with world-class cities (Wichaidit & Punyasiri, 2020). To advance the development of MICE cities to a world-class level, each component must be improved. However, have yet to become the top MICE cities in the world (Rattanawaraha & Thanaphaet, 2019).

On August 11, 2020, the TCEB held a meeting of the MICE City Assessment Committee. The meeting certifies 2020 MICE City Recognition Assessment of Songkhla Province, which is the sixth MICE City in Thailand (Hatyaitoday, 2020) Songkhla Province has various potential to promote the country's MICE industry. It is an important center for investment and the hub of southern Thailand. Songkhla is also a regional industrial development center with the government policy of the Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) (Tippeng et al., 2019) After Songkhla's designation as Thailand's sixth MICE city, a low level of assessment of the potential and competence of the city has been found. No concrete results or indicators of development are available, and a concrete policy to operate the MICE city is also lacking.

The findings of the study indicate a significant gap in policy studies concerning tourism and MICE. The existing research predominantly focuses on sustainable and creative tourism policies, while research on MICE policies is limited. Moreover, the review of MICE policy research is even weaker, despite the crucial role played by such policies in shaping the MICE industry. The development processes of MICE policies, which represent a crucial component of MICE policy research, are inadequately explored. Additionally, qualitative policy research has been insufficiently addressed in this field. It is recommended that authors acknowledge the pivotal role of MICE policies in promoting the development of MICE cities. (Ha Nam Khanh, 2018).

Therefore, it is imperative to recognize the need for an effective policy that can efficiently promote Songkhla Province as a potential international MICE destination. The policies act as a pivotal tool for the development of the MICE industry, facilitating economic, social, and cultural growth. They enable Thailand's provincial MICE cities to organize and host meetings, conventions, and international exhibitions, in addition to functioning as a hub for international MICE cities (Muhammad, et al., 2020). Given the significance of these factors, it is recommended that the proposed policy aimed at promoting Songkhla Province as an international MICE destination be extensively explored.

## Research Objective

### 1. MICE Industry

MICE industry is in parallel to the tourism industry. The MICE industry is another part of tourism that has an upward trend and generates a substantial amount of income in the tourism industry. MICE is a sector of the tourism industry that consists of four business groups: meetings, incentives, Conventions, and exhibitions. The MICE industry contributes more to GDP. In terms of GDP contribution per worker, MICE industry employees contribute 2.1 times more than average employees do in Thailand. The MICE industry is rapidly growing, with a compound annual growth rate that is 1.6 times higher than Thailand's GDP growth rate. In view of the contribution of the MICE industry to GDP contribution and its contribution to tax, the MICE industry pays two times more tax than it does to GDP. The MICE industry's return on investment, on average, for every 1 Baht that TCEB spends, 104.27 Baht is added to the GDP. Information from the TCEB indicates that during the fiscal year of 2019, from October 2018 to September 2019, a total of 1,273,981 international MICE travelers visited Thailand, which was higher than the international MICE travelers in fiscal year of 2018 (1,255,986) (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2019)

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2017) stated that MICE as a tourism company aimed at arranging conference, reward travel, regional conferences, and exhibitions under perfect and competent management in terms of operation and meeting place, food and beverage, tools and services, distribution of products displayed, and customs, among other things. According to Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (2018) defines the MICE tourism as follow, it comprises;

Meeting (M): A meeting case is one at which a community of people from the same organization or partnership come together to carry out a specific mission or events according to a predetermined schedule at a foreign, regional, or national level.

Incentive travel (I): Incentive is a networking experience intended to encourage staff or people who accomplish their job objectives. This is provided solely based on the company's travel expenses. Incentive travel is a more powerful option than money or other forms of compensation. It is a powerful motivator for employees to boost their success at the world, global, and regional levels.

A convention (C): Convention is a gathering of people who come together to debate, consult, or solve issues in related or interdisciplinary areas. Selecting a meeting place or venue takes time.

An exhibition (E): exhibition is a multi-purpose gathering in which items and goods are shown. Customers with buying power or who are involved in specific knowledge on certain goods and services are provided with items or services at events. It's used in displays to show off goods or services to prospective buyers. Meeting managers and guests, exhibitors and travelers, and reward travel backers are all examples of MICE operators or tourists. It is possible that the show will be planned.

Meanwhile, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (2018) explained MICE city that MICE city covers corporate meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions that is growing rapidly and continuously. According to Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (2018), International MICE City In terms of the conference, it must comply with the rules of the International Association of Conferences. (International Congress and Convention Association: ICCA) defines it as an international academic conference that is regularly held and held in rotation in at least 3 countries with at least 50 delegates and at international fairs and exhibitions. Must comply with the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) criteria that international exhibitions have at least 10 of all exhibitors from abroad. And there were at least 5% of the attendees from overseas with more than 3 countries participating in the event.



## 2. Policy

Dye (1984) stated that the government will select whether or not to participate in public policy. The state who decides to do so includes all of the government's operations, even regular ones. It occurs on occasion, as it focuses on things that the government wishes to undertake as well as delivering programs to citizens of community when policymakers chose not to take steps that are perceived to be the policy's core. According to Hall and Jenkins (2004), the term "public policy" encompasses more than just what governments do. Policymaking is a governmental practice that is economic and social features of a society. Likewise, Dunn (2017) explained that policy analysis is designed to provide policy relevant knowledge about five types of question: policy problem, expected policy outcome, preferred policies, observes policy outcome and policy performance. Answers to these questions yield, five type of policy-relevant knowledge, Moreover, Hall and Jenkins (1995) noted that what policymakers want to do or not do in regard to tourism is referred to as tourism public policy. However, there is rising cynicism about government efficacy, especially central government, as well as the intended effects and impacts of much government policy, like tourism policy. For tourism, Colin Michael Hall (2008) pointed out that policy is the nature of tourism planning and policy analysis that is undertaken would be decided by a specific intersection of variables at any given moment, our role in the broader tourism planning framework, and the type of tourism planning and policy analysis that is conducted. For MICE policy, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (2014) found that in the policy process for MICE city, The government sector needs to be determined or reduce some policy restrictions. To make it suitable to drive target provinces to MICE City. This is to create the province's readiness to support industrial growth.

### 2.1 Policy Formulation

Halász and Michel (2011) described that policy formulation is most important at higher strategic levels but policy formulation must be considered at each level of a transport planning process. The process can divide into two processes. The first is strategic policies in transport cover a larger area and include long-term strategies. These policies must be far sighted and consequently implemented. The second is regional and local transport policies are applied on regions and small areas such as towns and villages. According to Sidney (2017), Policy formulation is unquestionably an important stage in the policymaking process. Designing the options that decision makers will examine has a direct impact on the final policy decision. In addition, this process expresses and distributes power among social, political, and economic interests. Likewise, Turnpenny et al. (2015) identified policy formulation differs significantly from policy implementation. It is an essential phase of policymaking that is dedicated to "creating choices on what to do about a public problem." It is present in most, if not all, policymaking processes. If the agenda-setting stage of the well-known policy cycle is all about figuring out where to go, the policy formulation stage is all about figuring out how to get there. The formulation of policy to meet societal issues and needs has typically been a top-down process. Governments and people' representatives have played a key role in recognizing society's needs and challenges, as well as creating solutions (Charalabidis, et al., 2012) In summary, A policy is a set of declarations of beliefs, beliefs, and purpose that establishes priorities and serves as the foundation for coherent decision-making and resource allocation on a particular topic. Policies are a critical mechanism for an organization or country's government.

## 2.2 Policy Analysis

While MacRae and Wilde (1979) referred to policy analysis is described as the process of selecting from a variety of options to direct the application of a policy based on data and facts.

1) Identifying the issue, recognizing the problem, and redefining it to be more precise, to comprehend policy problems A must-do practice is defining policy questions.

2) Selection criteria, the guidelines that were used to make the decision are clearly stated. Consistency is often a requirement for the study.

3) Decision and alternative paradigm, it is important to construct a collection of alternatives to solve the issue under every policy environment. Reduce the negative consequences.

Moreover, Dunn (2017) explained that policy analysis is designed to provide policy relevant knowledge about five type of question: policy problem, expected policy outcome, preferred policies, observes policy outcome and policy performance. As mentioned above, policy analysis is the method of determining possible policy solutions to an issue and then evaluating such solutions to determine which is the most practical, reliable, and feasible. Conducting a policy review means that it followed a structured method to determine the right policy solution for the case. Lastly, all parts provide topics of these can be summarized in table 1.

**Table 1 The Summary of Content Structure of the Literature Review**

Topic	Related Theories	Output
MICE Industry	- MICE Industry theory - Tourism theory	International potential MICE destination of Songkhla Province.
Policy Policy Formulation Policy analysis	- Policy theory - Tourism policy theory - Best piratic policy	Policies for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE destination.

From the summary of content structure of the literature review; On this basis, it was possible to develop conceptual research framework, results from this approach in figure 1.

## Conceptual Research Framework

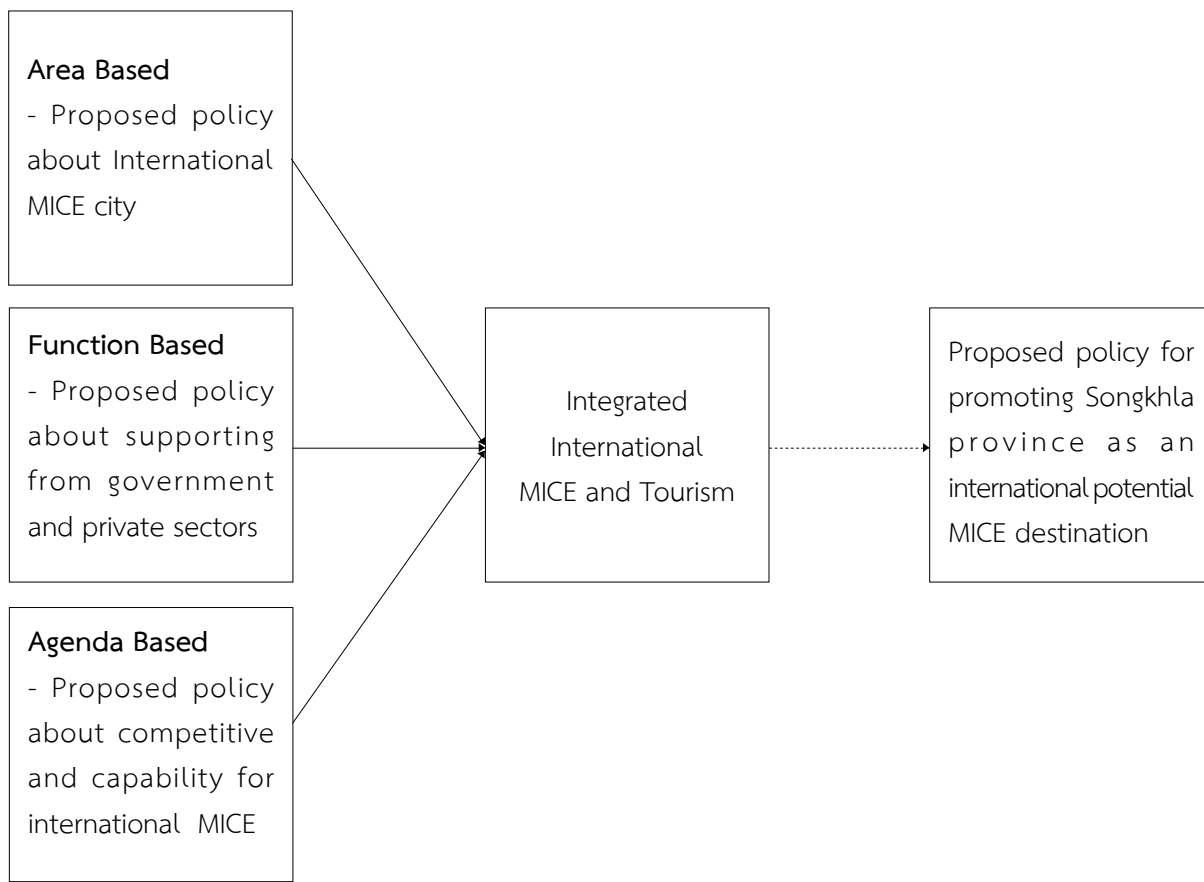


Figure 1 In depth interview and Focus Group Conceptual Research Framework from Quantitative Research in the Study.

## Research Methodology

Related research and literature review was investigated. This research used related literature, including theories, documents, books, and online information. The collected data were analyzed and synthesized to summarize and generate information about the proposed policies for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE destination. Through a semi-structured in-depth and focus group interview, Qualitative research was used to explore various proposed policies through a semi-structured in-depth and focus group interview.

### Sample and Data Collection

The sample size might be determined using a sampling plan. The sample for the in-depth interview included Songkhla Province's MICE industry stakeholders via non-probability sampling using a purposive sampling technique. The interview would involve 13-15 persons or until data were saturated. For the focus group interview, the sample included Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) members via non-probability sampling using a purposive sampling technique. The sample size was 6–12 people. The researcher obtained samples from a population of stakeholders involved on MICE industry; policies and qualify for a specific sample selection process, which included the policymakers or senior management who are primarily involved in the development strategy planning in MICE industry.

## Data Validation and Data Analysis

In this sense, the researcher used a semi-structured in-depth and focus group interviews because they are distinct in terms of obtaining information and providing more in-depth and comprehensive insights. Data triangulation method was used to assess the study's validity by gathering information from numerous people, organizations, and forms of primary and secondary data. To verify the accuracy of each data source, several data sources and data gathering techniques, such as semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis, were employed. The data from the interview were synthesized using inductive analysis. Then, the data were separated into various issues using coding analysis. Finally, the methodology of these research can be summarized in table 2.

**Table 2 The Summary of Research Methodology**

Data Collection	Methodology	Related Theories and output for proposed policy
Primary Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In-depth interview included Songkhla Province's MICE industry stakeholders 13-15 persons or until data were saturated.</li> <li>- Focus group interview, the sample included Thailand Convention &amp; Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) members was 6-12 people.</li> </ul>	<p>Area Based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposed policy about International MICE city</li> </ul> <p>Function Based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposed policy about supporting from government and private sectors</li> </ul> <p>Agenda Based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposed policy about competitive and capability for international MICE</li> </ul> <p>Integrated International MICE and Tourism</p> <p>Integrated International MICE and Tourism for promoting Songkhla as an international potential MICE destination.</p>
Secondary Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Related research and literature review was investigated. This research used related literature, including theories, documents, books, and online information.</li> <li>- Journal about MICE policy in Asia and Journal of beset practice in MICE industry.</li> </ul>	<p>The concept of proposed policies for promoting Songkhla as an international potential MICE destination</p>



## Results

The researcher analyzed the data to address objective research, that is, to propose a policy for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE destination. We conducted qualitative data analysis by using details from the related in-depth interview and focus group interviews.

Five policies for promoting Songkhla as an international potential MICE destination mentioned are aimed at promoting the Songkhla MICE industry as a MICE destination at the international level as follow:

### 1. Promoting and Elevating Songkhla to Become an International MICE City

#### 1.1 Specifying Songkhla as the International MICE Model City

To elevate Songkhla to become an international MICE city requires making it a model city. The reason is each city has different features, roadmaps, physical attributes, economy, and society, which leads to different development orders. Songkhla becoming an international MICE city requires suitable development forms. The city is suitable to become the MICE city of creations, innovations, and connectivity with multiculturalism. It is the south's important economic center. The city depicts the fun and vibrant image in relation with its core tourism campaign titled "Songkhla Fantastic: Awesomeness All Year Round." Songkhla is the trade center of the southern border. It has shopping centers, focusing on food culture, which is its local identity. It also has many spaces for creativity (e.g., Songkhla Old Town, the architectural heritage of which is high in value, and it maintains the identity of Songkhla; and the Old Wall archeological site, which is sometimes used by the authority to organize events and exhibitions). To cover all aspects of the push for Songkhla to become the MICE city of creations and innovations, the provincial government must promote innovative development to support communities in organizing smart MICE events.

#### 1.2 The City's Improvement Under the Assessment Criteria for International MICE City

Songkhla has passed the assessment to become Thailand's sixth MICE city in 2020, to which the TCEB criteria include the convenient access to the city and to convention venues, the support on MICE conventions from the city, additional activities, accommodations and related facilities, convention venues and their facilities, image and reputation of the city, the city's environment and risks, and risk management. In addition to this assessment that pushes for the city to become a regional MICE city, Songkhla must maintain its potential in line with the assessment while pushes for its potential to pass the international MICE assessment. The activities include the international events that are certified with the ICCA, trade exhibitions and exhibitions that are certified with the UFI and the push for Songkhla to become the top option for the MICE event in Asia. The events should attract domestic and international MICE visitors. They include the organizational conference from foreign countries, incentive trip for employees, international conference certified by the ICCA, and the trade exhibitions and exhibitions with foreign visitors that are certified by the UFI.

## 2. Elevating Quality and Standards of the Progressive MICE Event Organization

### 2.1 Event Organization with International Standard

To progressively elevate the quality and standards of MICE events, the venue standards in Songkhla must keep up with the current situation while covering all components of the MICE industry. It must cater to the needs of all stakeholders, service providers, and customers. There must be the push for hotels and convention centers in Songkhla to take part in the Thailand MICE Venue Standards (TMVS) and upgrade into the AMVS and ISO for convention centers, hotels, and event venues. These all are aimed at elevating the quality of services and competitiveness in the global MICE stage.

To elevate Songkhla to become the destination for green meetings in Asia and across the world, the encouragement and aid in resources that allow MICE operators in Songkhla to be certified with ISO 50001 will help specify technological strategies and management that improve the use of energy resources. It will also help cut cost and improve environmental management. The standardization of provincial food for international MICE events, such as featured dishes of Songkhla, fresh ingredients, and traditional cooking, is a crucial factor that attracts MICE travelers from all over the world. It also improves trust among food tourists. Songkhla must encourage operators in the industry to achieve food safety certification. Although many restaurants have received GMP and HACCP standards, the goal is to push food safety to the ISO 22000 chain for higher standard.

### 2.2 Information Technologies in MICE Events

We are living in the era of information. Information technologies are important for the development of the MICE industry. The use of technologies will facilitate events, starting at marketing and public relations. Songkhla must establish MICE intelligence information center, which helps interested people analyze competition in international markets. It will serve as a MICE information pool, the connection to related websites, and the presentation of activity calendar. The province must encourage the use of information technologies in MICE events, such as technologies for ticket reservations and registration and statistical system that records the number of visitors and attendees. This information is beneficial for the event organizers as they can use it to improve the activities. The use of a smart venue system and smart technologies—whether the equipment for visual, light, and sounds—and AI technologies to analyze the queues, are all crucial. Others include all-access venues, the use of safety technologies to prevent attendees and venues from harmful situations, and the use of location-based technology, event application, hybrid meeting and virtual reality and augment reality.

## 3. The Image Improvement in Terms of Safety and Hygiene

### 3.1 Safety Standards

The adoption of safety standards in MICE-related organizations will allow organizations in Songkhla to get ready for any incidents. The effective coordination and response to incidents and the post-incident recovery will allow businesses to run constantly. It will assure visitors with confidence. Songkhla must have the 22300-2551 MICE Security Management System, which the Prince of Songkhla University International Convention Center is now certified with and ISO 20121 Event Sustainability Management System, displaying its safety standards.

As Songkhla has areas connected with the three southernmost provinces, its location greatly affects security and tourist safety. Songkhla, Hat Yai Municipality, and related agencies have appropriate security management system, such as checkpoints, roadblocks, and patrols by officers-in-charge, and the use of equipment, such as bomb detectors. Additional security standards are also available, such as the stricter safety procedures at checkpoints and installation of CCTV in public places, department stores, entertainment venues, service venues, and other points at high risks.

### 3.2 Hygiene Standards

Hygiene standards have become extremely important following the COVID-19 outbreak. Songkhla must elevate the standards of event venues to match with the TMVS by adding up MICE Venue Hygiene Guidelines, which venues, organizers, and attendees must follow. Thailand is the first country to adopt the AMVS. The adoption of the policy and information will promote the standard of international events run in Songkhla.

## 4. Integrated Operations and Collaborations with Tourism and MICE Network

### 4.1 The Roadmap Leading to Practical Operations

Songkhla must integrate the operations and collaborations with public and private sectors, pushing the province to become a MICE destination and creating concrete results. Songkhla has established the committee that drives the MICE industry, who plays role as the policymaker, planner, coordinator who coordinates with the government, private businesses, educational institutions, and stakeholders in the development of the MICE industry. The government sector in the province (e.g., Ministry of Tourism and Sports, and Songkhla Provincial Administration) universities, and private sector (e.g., Thailand Incentive and Convention Association, the Thai Exhibition Association, Songkhla Tourism Business Association, Songkhla Chamber of Commerce) must collaborate. There must also be follow-up and assessment. The IMT-GT partnership also creates MICE-related tourism. The practical adoption of the policy by encouraging and improving the awareness on the tourism development and industrial policies, as well as the integration of the collaboration with all related parties and the roles of the network and organizations will lead to the drive of practical operations according to the role of each responsible parties.

### 4.2 Strengthening Partnership Network that Supports International MICE Events

To create partnership network that supports MICE events in targeted countries will encourage the collaboration that attracts world-class events to take place in Songkhla. Marketing promotions and supports, invitation of target groups, and partners will strengthen the upgrade of MICE events in the province to the global stage. Partnership network will be able to improve and enhance law enforcement related to the development of the local MICE industry, facilitating the organizers and MICE travelers (e.g., tax incentives for MICE-related organizations, customs incentives that attract investments, and businesses that are eyeing to operate in Songkhla).

## 5. Strengthening Competitiveness in the International MICE Industry

### 5.1 Strengthening MICE Strategies and WIN Strategies

To strengthen the MICE strategies to make Songkhla an international MICE city, variation of activities are required. MICE activities will be run to drive the economy and targeted industries in the area. The variation of MICE activities is also crucial, as MICE activities encourage buying and selling, investment, business partnership, and knowledge and technology sharing for the development of new innovations. To increase the number of MICE events in Songkhla, the SCEB aims to increase the demand for the event through strategic partnership, unique innovations, and the attraction of tourists. Educational knowledge and statistical data will help with the plans. The MICE industry should prioritize international and domestic MICE events via unique and sustainable products and the experience enhancement for MICE organizers and travelers.

## Conclusions and Discussions

The main objectives of driving and upgrading Songkhla to be an international MICE city to build competitiveness and be a tool to drive the tourism industry and the target industry in Songkhla Province. These goals are to establish the province as a model for creative and innovative MICE city; improve the image of the city through multiculturalism; manage the area for international MICE certification; enhance food potential to create distinctiveness in the area, including improving the quality of city according to international MICE city assessment criteria. If met, Songkhla can be accredited by the ICCA. Organizing trade fairs and exhibitions can also meet the criteria to be certified by the UFI. They can also make Songkhla Province as the main choice for international MICE City this matter is consistent with research of Thirachaya (2019) explored the suggestions for the transformation of historical sites into MICE business cities. They suggested that tourism management should consider appropriate administration in the following areas of tourism personnel. To propose a policy for promoting Songkhla Province as an international potential MICE as the destination of MICE tourism in the international level, is discussed considering the following: 1) promoting and elevating Songkhla to become an international MICE city; In addition to the MICE city, the field of marketing is also important. MICE can assist in the marketing and branding of tourism destinations, especially image (Wang & Luo, 2018) 2) elevating quality and standards of the progressive MICE event organization; The findings highlight the crucial strategic steps that should be taken to enhance the state of business tourism. Furthermore, human resources in the MICE industry are also important (Wang & Luo, 2018). 3) image improvement in terms of safety and hygiene; 4) integrated operations and collaborations with tourism and MICE network; stakeholders are those who contribute to or have anything to do with the MICE industry in general Alananzeh et al. (2019). 5) strengthening competitiveness in the international MICE industry. The proposed policy is consistent with Almeida-García (2018) study about the analysis of tourism policy in a developing country, Morocco. The study divided the policy into six key sections: product, transportation, education, marketing and promotion, institutional structure, and tourism environment. Product, which is responsible for the majority of the plan's actions, is the most important. In addition, it is consistent with the study of Price (2021) who claimed that government policies concerning industrial tourism can achieve potential partnership for growth. The policy focuses on industrial tourism and tourist brand, which are fundamentally based on industrial sites, emphasizing their conservation, marketing, and fostering of community ties. Furthermore, studies of Lekgau and Tichaawa (2021) found significant issues with the MICE sector's ability to obtain money. Crisis management, better technology integration, and capacity assistance have been suggested as elements enhancing MICE tourism recovery resilience to the present (and future) pandemic. Some of these policies and tactics are still in the development stage.

Moreover, elevating quality and standards of MICE consist of the study of Shuaytong and Chotchakornpant (2020) they found that the standards and objectives of policy requirements is an affecting the success of financial aid under infrastructure development.

## **Research Implication**

### **Policy Implications**

1) The provincial development strategic group, Songkhla Provincial Office, can propose strategic plans and policies for the MICE industry to become the main industry of Songkhla that drives the economy for the future. It is an existing industry that can expand (First S-Curve) and needs to be developed urgently. From the research results, Songkhla Province is ready to be a MICE city according to the overall assessment of different aspects that met the criteria of TCEB. Moreover, integrating tourism plans with MICEs can contribute to developments in the same direction.

2) Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (Public Organization) TCEB, Songkhla Provincial Office and Songkhla Provincial Tourism and Sports Office should create strategies with the goal of making Songkhla an international MICE city by setting clear a market position in terms of meeting, tourism for incentive, international conference, and exhibitions to be in line with the provincial development strategy. The promotion of marketing activities can create the image of MICE city as an international MICE destination. Therefore, the marketing position of Songkhla Province will help support the development of its image to be outstanding international MICE.

### **Managerial Implications**

Research results will gain new knowledge that can be applied to develop or improve the effective use of policy recommendations. The data from research results can develop a particular area and increase the potential of personnel by developing and supporting skilled workers in accordance with the market demands in terms of foreign language communication. They can also use information technology in work knowledge and expertise in MICE business knowledge of various types of meeting formats to develop and upgrade the service quality to meet the standards of labor characteristics in the MICE industry to be recognized internationally effectively.

### **Research Contribution**

In formulating policy recommendations, local government agencies play an important role in supporting the growth and competitiveness of the MICE industry, reviewing MICE policy recommendations in line with tourism development plans of the province, especially the improvement and development of rules and regulations. Most of the practices are inflexible, causing a burden on the government to enforce and creating a burden on operators to follow the province's MICE industry, particularly, the agencies operating directly, including SCEB and Songkhla Provincial Administrative Organization.

## Recommendation for Future Research

1) Taking sample lessons from countries that are successful in the MICE industry and applying them to the local context should be conducted to prepare for changes to support the MICE industry in the future, looking at the trend, and seeing the changing trends of the MICE industry to cope with the changing industry.

2) Analysis and determination of the role of the government sector, the private sector, and those involved in driving the MICE industry is an important factor that will bring the policy of MICE industry into practice because these agencies play an important role in driving and promoting the MICE industry.

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