

# The Influence of Destination Attributes on the MICE Tourism Industry in Bangkok, Thailand

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The image and reputation of a destination has a significant impact on tourists' travel decisions. Various approaches and strategies have been utilised by many countries to develop their destination image, however Thailand has placed less emphasis on developing this touristic image. Strategies for creating this image are somewhat vague and ineffective in the Thai tourism industry. This study therefore aims to investigate the roles of promotion tools and meetings, travel incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) in devising a touristic image. Further, the perceptions of MICE participants will be identified surrounding the importance of these promotion tools, on MICE destination attributes and on overall destination image. A quantitative approach was employed in this study with a structured questionnaire administered to 1000 respondents selected through the cluster random sampling technique. Data was collected from participants of MICE tourism in Bangkok, Thailand. The findings of this study reveal that significant differences exist in respondents' perceptions on the importance of MICE destination attributes.

**Key words:** *Destination Attributes, MICE tourism, Bangkok, Thailand.*

## Introduction

There are nine different types of tourism in Thailand including desert tourism; health and wellness; recreational; educational; adventure; eco-tourism; meeting relatives and friends; cultural, and MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) (Brito & Pratas, 2015; Jermsittiparsert & Chankoson, 2019). Among these, MICE tourism is one of the most integral segments of Thai tourism. The success of this sector is encouraging Thailand to be the most successful MICE destination in the world, more specially in the Asian and Western regions.

Thailand's security and safety have branded the country as a well-known and reputable tourist destination in the Asian region. Further, Thailand's warm hospitality and wide range of attractions makes it an attractive destination for Western travellers. Thailand subsequently earns billions of dollars from its thriving tourism industry (Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016). The unparalleled natural location, ancient sites, cultural and religious site and local traditions available in Thailand attract huge numbers of travellers from around the world.

**Figure 1.** Common MICE website features

Category		Features	
STATIC	Provision	Context	About Us, Accommodation, Attractions, Catering/F&B, Culture, Expo Guide, Facilities, FAQ's, Floor Plans, History, Introduction Page, Location/Map, Privacy Statement, Rates, Rules and Regulations, Seating plans, Services, Site Map, Term of Use/ Copyright, Travel and Hotel, Venue Details (Specification), Visitor Info
		Contact	Address, Emails, Fax, Hotel Code, Key Staff, Telephone, Toll Free
	Marketing	Promotion	Events, Job Opportunity, Latest News/Media Release, Lucky Draw, Other Program, Packages, Specials, Tickets
		Branding	Affiliations, Honor, Logo, Slogan/Motto, Testimonials
INTERACTIVE	Processing	Presentation	Movie Download, Online Movie/Virtual Tour, Online Slides, Photo
		Supporting Functions	Bookmark, Calculator, File Download, Guest Book, Printing, Search
		Planning	Menu, Request Info, Request Proposal, Tour Planning
	Transaction	Agent Booking, Enquiries, Feedback, Online Tickets, Reservation, Tracking	

Lee, Nagano, Taylor, Lim and Yao (2010) suggest that the Internet has proven to be an effective promotion tool for MICE tourist event, providing easily accessible online registration and useful platform for meeting and destination information. A study by Gannon et al. (2017) investigated the role of World-Wide-Wave (WWW) to promote MICE tourism and the contribution of MICE on the local economy. WWW was found to have a significant impact on MICE promotion, with its simple marketing website able to market local destinations on both a national and international scale. Further, WWW not only spreads information about the destination but also increases MICE tourism worldwide. In turn, MICE attractions increase the local economy, stimulate business opportunities and create viable economic benefits for residents. The study also affirmed that MICE websites enhance the performance of local economic linkages and thus strengthen the country's revenue. These websites enable MICE event tourists and other visitors of the host destination to build their own itinerary and learn about the product on offer before they start their business trip or

holiday. Figure 1 above illustrates the identified features of a MICE website, which include presentation, planning, contact, context, promotion, branding, supporting function and transaction. These features are grouped into three categories of context, marketing and processing, and are then categorised by either statistic interactive components.

Due to both national and international benefits, MICE tourism has become one of the most influential tourism segments in Thailand. MICE attractions generate international interest by generating employment, building business contacts, and enabling access to new ideas and technologies. On a local level, MICE activities can increase investments in local tourism infrastructures and generate revenue for the local economy. Specially in the off season, MICE events assist small businesses in sharing benefits for professionals like photographers or florists. Furthermore, MICE events promote the country on an international scale as the country organises meeting and other activities tailored for international travellers (Han, Al-Ansi, Olya, & Kim, 2019).

Due to increasing globalisation and liberalisation (Jermsittiparsert, Sriyakul, & Rodoosong, 2013), the importance of MICE is encouraged by the trade barriers. Table 1 below represents the remarkable growth in areas like Asia, the Middle East and Central Europe between 2000-2006. The huge growth in MICE tourism can be seen in its evolution across these regions.

**Table 1.** Number of meetings per continent or region

Region	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Europe	2,120	2,416	2,409	2,733	2,703	3,168	3,218	3,617	3,544	3,333
Middle East	597	640	666	706	755	870	821	1,109	1,104	1,025
Asia&										
North America	505	570	603	692	625	774	750	801	725	649
Latin America	237	263	264	332	331	319	368	415	473	491
Australia	169	152	146	222	192	188	187	218	208	217
Africa	85	124	104	188	188	136	130	144	148	123
World	3,713	4,165	4,210	4,803	4,724	5,455	5,474	6,304	6,202	5,838

MICE tourism increased by 5.1% every year between 2000-2007. The Asia-Pacific region witnessed the highest growth during these years, and a huge development project was initiated to respond to the rising demand for MICE tourism. Although the progress of MICE tourism remained strong, this growth was challenged by emerging MICE destinations in the Middle East, Central and Western Europe (Martín, Román, & Gonzaga, 2017).

Although its attractions provide numerous benefits to the local and international tourism industries, there also exist risks with MICE tourism, such as delegates spending large

amounts of money during the off-season demand (Han et al., 2019). Despite this, MICE can positively enlighten the relationship between a host country and international participants, which is further developed when the host destination fulfils the participants' needs and meets their demands and preferences. Most countries around the world use MICE to revitalise their economy and improve their destination image. For instance, Macau has introduced MICE to transform its gambling dominant image into that of a successful MICE destination, as well as to revitalise the local economy (Leong, 2007).

### ***Research objectives***

1. To recognise the importance of MICE destination characteristics as perceived by MICE event participants.
2. To identify the influence of MICE destination characteristics on destination image formation.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***An overview of MICE tourism***

MICE tourism involves a variety of subcomponent events, including association meetings, speakers, seminars, workshops, banquets and social events (Junio, Kim, & Lee, 2017). Although no unified definition of MICE exists, Albayrak and Caber (2015) classify it as a new form of tourism aimed at increasing the number of conventions, exhibitions, meetings and conferences in order to build a country's tourism industry. Oppewal, Huybers & Crouch (2015) state that MICE tourism emphasises a certain theme, subject or agenda. Previous studies indicate that the term "MICE" is known under several different names: in Europe, MICE is referred to as the meeting industry, while in Australia it is the business event industry, and North America and Asia constitute a myriad of related tourism activities under the MICE umbrella (Locke, Berr, & Kundu, 2011). For this study, a MICE destination is referred to as a "meeting destination" or "convention destination", while MICE tourists are referring to as "delegates," "attendees" or "participants".

#### ***Meetings***

Meetings refer to a gathering of people in a place for certain activities (Chahal & Devi, 2015). Another definition of meetings proposed by Crouch and Brent Ritchie (1997) is the planned event in which people gather together to achieve some function or purpose. According to the Convention Industry Council, a meeting is defined as an event in which participants join in communicative meetings for educational or other purposes.



### ***Incentive travels***

Incentive travel refers to a non-cash reward offered to employees in response to excellent work productivity, such as increased sales or other outstanding management achievements (King, Chen, & Funk, 2015). Another popular definition of incentive travel is defined by Bonn, Cho, Lee and Kim (2016) as the reward given to an employee for previous outstanding performance in their company.

### ***Conferences***

A conference refers to an annual meeting of similar professional people to exchange and share information (Ruzic, Vuckovic, & Nikolic, 2003). Scholars have differentiated “conference” from related terms such as congress or convention. A convention is usually used for business purposes in the USA, while a conference is typically used by academies and for technical purposes in Europe. Congresses refer to the three types of meetings, including family gatherings, scientific gatherings and trade meetings. Conventions, conferences and congresses are therefore different terms that are often used for similar purposes. According to the author, congresses are viewed as general sessions, conventions are typically seen throughout America and the Asia Pacific regions, and conferences are used to obtain information and to plan, and problem solve through high participation sessions.

### ***Exhibitions***

An exhibition refers to a public show for the promotion of goods and services (Oppewal et al., 2015). Two types of shows are identified in the literature, including trade shows and consumer shows. The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) in Thailand defines exhibitions as “any trading activity aiming to present local or foreign products and/or services to promote, market, or introduce them for a definite period or location, whether or not accompanied by direct sale to the public or directed to public consumers.” MoIT has also defined fairs as exhibitions containing various other activities such as folkloric and artistic shows, parties, prizes or competitions, and in which many countries participate worldwide.

MICE tourism is further categorised into regional meetings, national gatherings and interregional gatherings (De Lara & Har, 2008). Bonn et al. (2016) state that these types of meetings are designed and assigned based on the number of participants, the nature of sponsors, meeting duration and pre- or post-tour programmes. In spite of increasing numbers and diversity of travellers,

MICE events are becoming the most common purposes of travel and tourism, meaning that such activities are a crucial sector of the tourism industry. The year 2000 saw a spike in

MICE events worldwide which has continued to grow. Due to this increasing popularity and the growing numbers and diversity of travellers, various challenges exist within the MICE sector. MICE events require sufficient infrastructure and government support to keep up with tourist demands. Further, appropriate training and services must be granted, marketing issues must be resolved, economic benefits require accurate estimation and management and social cultural benefits of MICE must be considered. (Della Corte, Sciarelli, Cascella, & Del Gaudio, 2015).

Throughout Europe and the USA, the maximum number of conventions held was 54.7% out of total 9,433 conventions. According to Kim, Chung and Chae (2003), the total spending on these conventions was approximately 122.1 billion US dollars. Similarly, the Asia Pacific region showed significant growth of 124% in 1996. Given the importance of MICE tourism and its rapid growth, many countries are prioritising MICE tourism as an additional source of income to boost economic growth and to generate a positive international image. In order to achieve these economic goals and ensure long-term growth of their tourism industries, for example, many countries are instigating ideas and approaches to appeal directly to MICE events (Peter & Anandkumar, 2016).

### ***Characteristics of MICE tourism***

MICE consists of four components in which its events differ from mass tourism, and is therefore considered a high profit industry (Leong, 2007). A study by Wootton (2006) conducted in the tourism sector of Wales found a significant revenue difference between MICE tourism and other tourism segments. The research showed that MICE tourism provides four times the revenue to Wales' economy compared to other aspects of its tourism industry. The main advantage of MICE tourism is that events can take place at any time of year, including off-season periods. Although event planners avoid summer months and public holidays, MICE events are not restricted to a certain season (Caber, Albayrak, & İsmayılı, 2017). Another advantage of MICE is its use of green tourism, meaning that most activities are held indoors and are environmentally friendly. MICE also fosters loyalty between the tourists and the destinations, thus encouraging revisiting among participants with family and friends in the future.

MICE tourism is an important tool to promote and market a host destination (Milićević & Petrović, 2017), attracting tourists from around the world which in turn contributes to the local economy and builds the country's image. MICE tourism can be a powerful promotional method for a host country through the use of media, which in turn enhances the destination image (Kong & Chang, 2016). Complications can arise when differentiating MICE participants or business tourists from leisure travellers. Business travellers are less cost-sensitive and spend more time in a destination compared to other types of visitors. Regardless

of business travellers and leisure travellers, however, most destinations provide similar facilities such as accommodation, transportation and required information (Hoque, 2016).

### ***Contributions of MICE tourism***

MICE tourism plays a vital role for the development of local communities. It enhances the image of the host country and contributes largely to the development of local infrastructure and other sectors (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004). Improving the facilities and services to meet the demands of MICE events and their participants subsequently improves the image of the host destination, transforming it from a traditional location serving leisure tourists into a multipurpose destination catering to both leisure and business tourists. For this reason, convention centres are now common around the world in efforts to boost MICE tourism events to improve economic growth and country image (Buathong & Lai, 2017).

### ***MICE destination attributes***

MICE destination is described as a complex product offering goods and services that directly contribute to the organisation of meetings (Altareri, 2016). Destination attributes comprise all elements of a non-home location that attract travellers away from their homes. Martín et al. (2017) indicate that MICE destination constitutes a combination of amenities, affordability, ancillary services, accessibility, attractions and activities.

Dwyer, Dragičević, Armenski, Mihalič and Knežević Cvelbar (2016) further define MICE destination attributes as amalgams of tourism products that offer an integrated experience to MICE tourism participants. The scholars suggest that MICE destinations can provide high quality attributes and safety levels to host events while also providing participants with opportunities for leisure activities. For instance, Bulatović and Rajović (2015) studied the attributes that enabled Macau to achieve success as an international MICE destination and found that accessibilities, amenities and attractions were essential among other attributes. It is therefore important to consider the destination attributes for event planners, attendees, host destinations and their associations for the success of MICE tourism. Due to the increasing global competition for MICE tourism, destination planners must accurately identify the key criterion for hosting successful events and should initiate marketing strategies according to the needs and demands of participants (Dwyer et al., 2016).

### ***Accessibility***

Accessibility is another underlying component of MICE tourism and refers to the relationship between tourism and transport. Effective transportation options should be linked with tourist areas and with the MICE destination. Accessibility denotes the flexibility of traveling from

one place to another and should allow attendees to travel efficiently and affordably to and from the conference site. Accessibility also refers to travelling factors relating to the location of the convention centre. For instance, the centre should typically be situated close to a central airport with access to sufficient transportation, highways and hotels (Kelly & Nankervis, 2001). A study by Meidan (1984) confirmed that 40% of a participant's expenditure went towards accommodation, followed by the 39% to transportation, with the remaining assets spent on other activities during such as shopping or recreation. Good accessibility therefore affects the success of MICE events for any country and subsequently impacts global competition.

### *Ancillary services*

Ancillary services refer to the necessary elements provided by a host destination to uphold the quality of MICE events. These element usually include health care facilities, freight forwarding, effective communication systems and qualified employees to serve the MICE participants (Marais, du Plessis, & Saayman, 2017). All facilities should be available either in the hotel or in the convention centre. The quality of these services should be maintained while minimising costs for participants, which reflect the overall image of the destination.

### *Affordability*

Affordability refers to the minimisation of costs surrounding the organisation of MICE events in efforts to offer achievable fees to participants. These include costs of food and beverage services, accommodation, rent, travel, sight-seeing and other related tourist expenses (Z Zainuddin, Radzi, & Zahari, 2015). Cost is a vital and complex matter for the successful running of a MICE event and plays an underlying role in total tourism flow. A study in Australia by Dwyer et al. (2016) investigated the importance of price in operating MICE tourism. Their study was based on the data of primary research conducted by the International Visitor Survey and the Australian Tourist Commission. Results showed that international MICE tourists' largest expenditure items within Australia were on accommodation, shopping, and food and drink. Similarly, De Lara and Har (2008) confirmed that price is the underlying factor for the selection of a MICE event in a destination.

### *Attractions*

Attractions refer to a location's sought-after or attractive places aimed at enticing visitors. The attraction of a destination is often a key factor in selecting tourism activities. Two types of attractions are typically considered by travellers, the first being a location's natural attractions like flora and fauna, its overall climate and the environment of the destination (Avraham, 2016). Secondly, artificial attractions include museums, water sports, theme parks

and other man-made tourist areas that factor into the decision-making process for tourists. In addition to these attractions, a destination's image, safety and security, hotel reputation and place of the actual MICE event are necessities for MICE travellers. Cultural attractions like local music, folklore and authentic cuisine are also powerful factors that attract MICE participants. All of these elements provide additional value to a location or MICE event, and tourism effectively does not exist without such attractions (Alanzeh, Jawabreh, Al Mahmoud & Hamada, 2018).

### *Activities*

MICE participants usually attending the hosted events with their family or friends, with a reported 60% of attendees planning to engage in recreational activities with family and friends in addition to the MICE events (Rogerson, 2015; Castro, 2018). The leisure activities offered in a MICE location are therefore critical to the event's success. Resources like swimming facilities, surfing, sunbathing and volleyball amenities, for example, would add this recreational value to a MICE destination.

Page and Connell (2006) suggest that the importance of MICE destination attributes influence a participant's evaluation and perception of the destination image. This study therefore aims to evaluate the perceptions of MICE event organisers from Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan on the importance of MICE destination attributes. A self-administered questionnaire comprising seven attributes on a five-point Likert scale was allocated to the respondents. The amenities factor was rated by respondents as the most important attribute, followed by accessibility and services, while attractions and climate were deemed the least important attributes. Zaliha Zainuddin, Hilmy, Ghafar, Mohd and Mohd (2012) identified amenities and ancillary services to be the most important attributes, while climate was the least important element for MICE participants.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research design*

Research designs are procedures for collecting, analysing and interpreting data using qualitative and quantitative research. The differences in beliefs about how research should be conducted has resulted in three paradigms or schools of thoughts. Positivist research is usually associated with quantitative data, the analysis of which is performed through using statistical methods.

### ***Population and sample***

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) provided a table (see Appendix A) which shows that the sample size for a population of 1,000,000 should comprise of at least 384 respondents. Authors also pointed out that most researchers consider the sample size above 200 and below 1,000. Based on the cluster sampling procedure, MICE events were divided into four clusters: conferences, meetings, incentives and exhibition events. Participants were randomly chosen from these four clusters from the target population of domestic and international MICE participants in Thailand.

### ***Instrument development and design***

This study distributed a self-administered questionnaire to participants for data collection, the design of which was based on previous studies. This questionnaire was developed through a thorough review of previous studies on destination image and MICE destination attributes to extract variables for each research construct. These variables were then measured through modified selected items to suite the context of the study. A panel of experts then evaluated the data collection instrument through sharing opinions, suggestions and comments to enhance its clarity and readability. The panel further identified any items that were potentially objectionable to the respondents.

## **Results and Findings**

### ***MICE destination attributes***

The construct of MICE destination attributes for this study consisted of five factors. The means and standard deviations of indicators were based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being “not at all important” to 7 being “very important”. This measurement scale consisted of 20 items reflecting accessibility, affordability, ancillary services, attractions and activities. Another 3 items were used to measure future visit intentions of MICE event participants. As depicted below in Table 2, the data from this study shows that the majority of high mean scores of MICE destination attributes perceived by the participants belonged to ancillary services, affordability, activities, attractions and accessibility.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Accessibility	5.2410	1.13411
Attractions	5.3390	.97315
Activities	5.5500	1.01909
Affordability	5.5780	1.04259
Ancillary services	5.7590	1.7590
Intention to visit	5.7810	1.5452

As seen in Table 2, ancillary services produced the highest mean score, followed by affordability (5.5780), activities (5.5500), attractions (5.3390) and accessibility (5.2410). It can therefore be concluded that respondents were more satisfied with ancillary services compared to other tourism aspects and were least satisfied with accessibility. Regarding future visit intentions for MICE events in the same destination, most participants agreed to return in the future. In addition, participants were given three blank spaces to specify any other attributes not mentioned in the questionnaire that were of particular interest in their MICE travel behaviours or intention. Most participants did not answer this question, however, and wrote the word “none” which denotes that all notable attributes were covered in the first survey section. Few participants mentioned some additional attributes, but it was found that these already existed in question one. For example, some participants wrote the attributes “safety is very important” or “ease of transportation to the event site,” though these factors were already covered within the questionnaire design.

### *Independent sample t-test*

A t-test was utilised to show the differences between female and male respondents’ perceptions of MICE destination attributes. A summary of the test of differences is tabulated and presented below in Table 3. In all of these factors, male participants tended to have higher and more positive perceptions of MICE destination attributes than female participants.

**Table 3:** Group statistics from independent t-test in terms of gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Accessibility	Male	540	5.3019	1.10975	.04776
	Female	460	5.1696	1.15920	.05405
Attractions	Male	540	5.4222	.94342	.04060
	Female	460	5.2413	.99914	.04659
Activities	Male	540	5.5926	1.03767	.04465
	Female	460	5.5000	.99563	.04642

Affordability	Male	540	5.5907	1.01798	.04381
	Female	460	5.5630	1.07169	.04997
Ancillary services	Male	540	5.8204	1.02254	.04400
	Female	460	5.6870	1.03629	.04832

As shown in Table 3, the mean differences were found for accessibility (male= 5.3019, female = 5.1696), attractions (male = 5.4222, female = 5.2413), activities (male= 5.5926, female=5.5000), affordability (male= 5.5907, female = 5.5630) and ancillary services (male = 5.8204, Female = 5.6870). This t-test indicates that male participants produced a higher mean value than female participants.

**Table 4:** Independent samples t-test for gender and MICE attributes

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Accessibility	Equal variances assumed	1.841	998	.066	.13229	.07187
	Equal variances not assumed	1.834	958.144	.067	.13229	.07212
Attractions	Equal variances assumed	2.941	998	.003	.18092	.06151
	Equal variances not assumed	2.928	952.898	.003	.18092	.06179
Activities	Equal variances assumed	1.433	998	.152	.09259	.06463
	Equal variances not assumed	1.437	983.985	.151	.09259	.06441
Affordability	Equal variances assumed	.419	998	.676	.02770	.06618
	Equal variances not assumed	.417	955.199	.677	.02770	.06645
Ancillary services	Equal variances assumed	2.044	998	.041	.13341	.06528
	Equal variances not assumed	2.041	968.680	.041	.13341	.06535

As shown in Table 4 above, accessibility (.066), attractions (.003), activities (.152) and ancillary services (.041) have significant differences in terms of opinions between male and

female respondents. Affordability (.677) produced no significant difference between male and female respondents. These results indicate that male and female respondents have different opinions regarding accessibility, attractions, activities and ancillary services attributes, though they share similar views on affordability attributes of MICE events in Thailand.

**Table 5:** Group statistics from independent t-test in terms of nationality

	Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Accessibility	Local	661	5.3238	1.12863	.04390
	International	339	5.0796	1.12903	.06132
Attractions	Local	661	5.3601	.94413	.03672
	International	339	5.2979	1.02759	.05581
Activities	Local	661	5.6581	.96352	.03748
	International	339	5.3392	1.09056	.05923
Affordability	Local	661	5.6520	1.03717	.04034
	International	339	5.4336	1.03954	.05646
Ancillary services	Local	661	5.8820	1.01115	.03933
	International	339	5.5192	1.02718	.05579

As shown in Table 5 above, mean differences were categorised according to local or international tourists. The 5 attributes present in the t-test included accessibility, attractions, activities, affordability and ancillary services. Mean differences were found for accessibility (local = 5.3238, female = 5.0796), attractions (local = 5.3601, international = 5.2979), activities (local = 5.6581, international = 5.3392), affordability (local = 5.6520, international = 5.4336) and ancillary services (local = 5.8820, international = 5.5192). This data indicates that higher mean values were produced for local tourists than international travellers.

**Table 6:** Independent samples t-test for nationality and MICE attributes

Variables		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Accessibility	Equal variances assumed	3.237	998	.001	.24411	.07541
	Equal variances not assumed	3.237	681.552	.001	.24411	.07541
Attractions	Equal variances assumed	.956	998	.340	.06213	.06501
	Equal variances not assumed	.930	633.230	.353	.06213	.06681

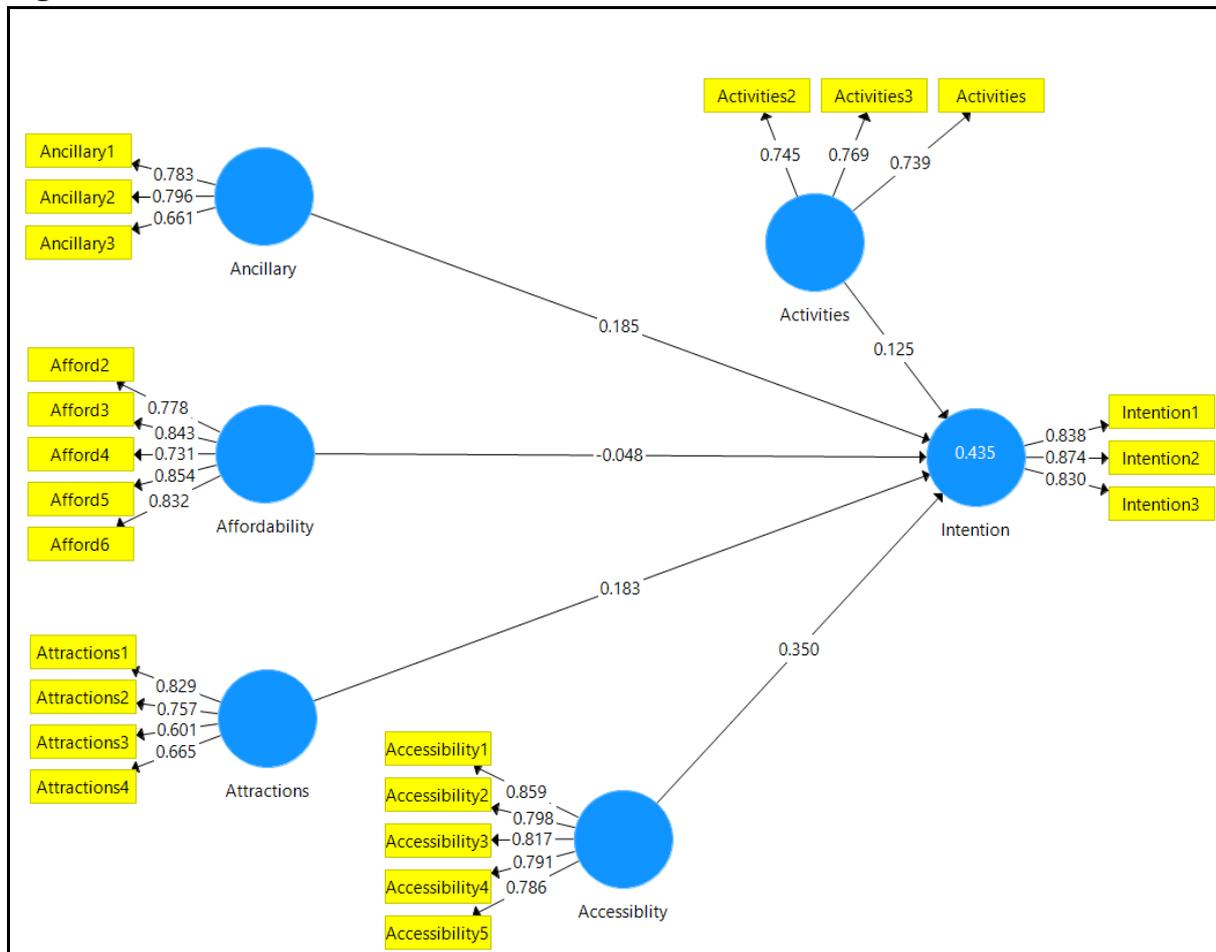
Activities	Equal variances assumed	4.734	998	.000	.31886	.06736
	Equal variances not assumed	4.549	612.525	.000	.31886	.07009
Affordability	Equal variances assumed	3.150	998	.002	.21841	.06934
	Equal variances not assumed	3.148	680.390	.002	.21841	.06939
Ancillary services	Equal variances assumed	5.342	998	.000	.36282	.06791
	Equal variances not assumed	5.315	672.386	.000	.36282	.06826

In terms of nationality, Table 6 above shows t-test results of the differences between local and international tourists' perceptions of MICE destination attributes. Based on findings, the statistical analysis revealed significant values for accessibility (.001), attractions (.340), activities (.000), affordability (.002) and ancillary services (.000). Both local and international tourist should therefore travel differently for MICE events.

### ***Assessment of measurement models***

In the measurement model for this study, the outer loadings were good enough to fit into the construct (see Figure 2 below). Outer loadings of the study for accessibility were 0.859, 0.798, 0.817, 0.791 and 0.786 respectively; attractions were 0.829, 0.757, 0.601 and 0.665 respectively; activities were 0.745, 0.769 and 0.739 respectively; affordability was 0.778, 0.843, 0.731, 0.854 and 0.32 respectively, and lastly, ancillary services were 0.783, 0.796 and 0.661 respectively.

**Figure 2.** Results for the assessment of measurement models



As shown in Table 7, Accessibility1 produced the highest value of 0.859 while Accessibility5 produced the lowest of 0.786 value in the accessibility variable. For the attraction variable, Attractions1 had the highest value of 0.829 with the lowest value produced by Attractions3 at 0.601. The activities, affordability and ancillary services variables each produced the highest values of Activities3 (0.769), Afford5 (0.854) and Ancillary2(0.796), with the lowest values being Activities (0.739), Afford4 (0.731) and Ancillary3 (0.661). The value of Cronbach's Alpha for accessibility was 0.871; for attractions was 0.694; for activities was 0.615; for affordability 0.870, and ancillary services was 0.614. The rho\_A value for accessibility produced a 0.883 value; attractions produced 0.754; activities was 0.617; affordability was 0.895, and ancillary services was 0.631. Lastly, the AVE value of all variables was more than 0.5 which demonstrates a good measurement model.

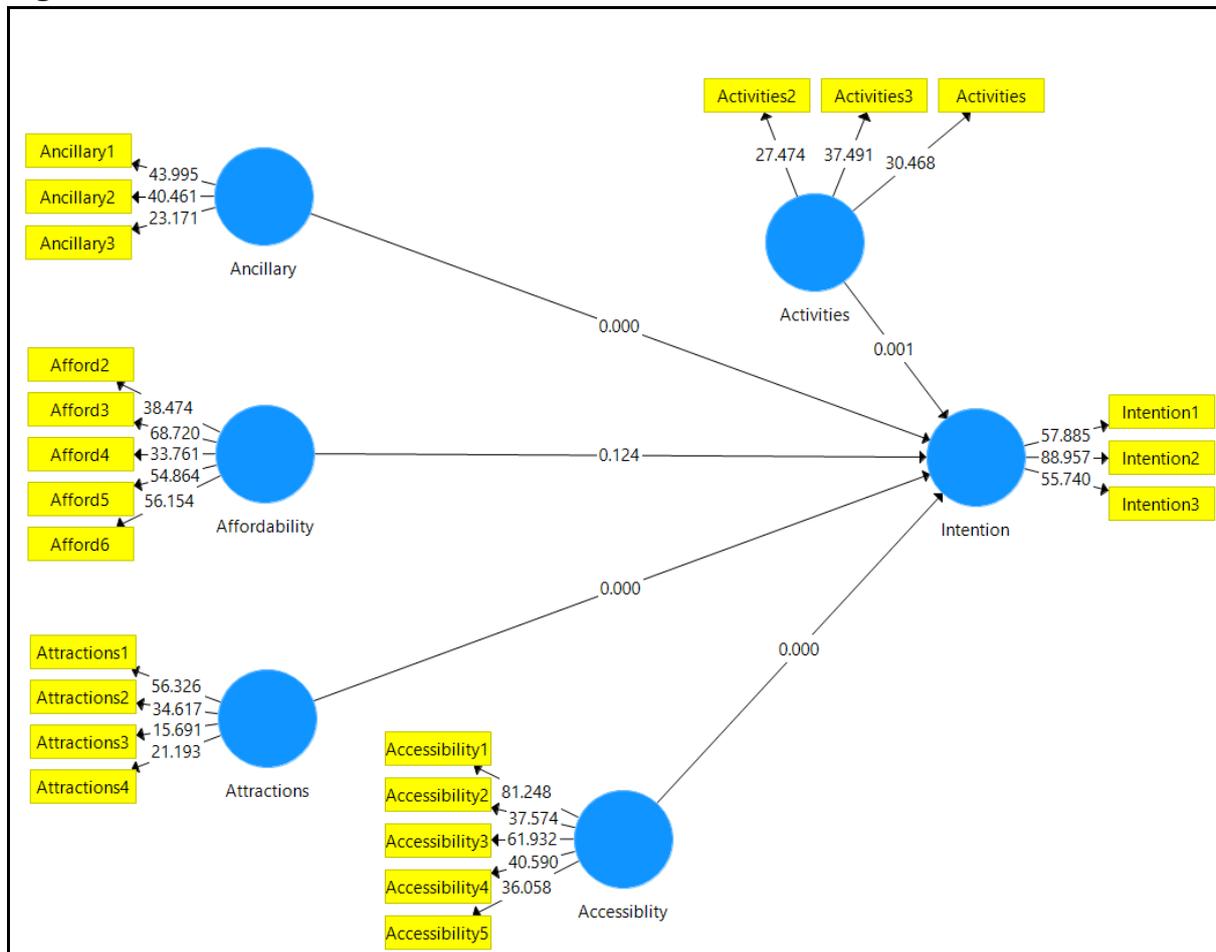
**Table 7:** Results for the assessment of measurement models

Construct	Items	Loadings /Weight	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Accessibility	Accessibility1	0.859	0.871	0.883	0.905	0.657
	Accessibility2	0.798				
	Accessibility3	0.817				
	Accessibility4	0.791				
	Accessibility5	0.786				
Attraction	Attractions1	0.829	0.694	0.754	0.808	0.516
	Attractions2	0.757				
	Attractions3	0.601				
	Attractions4	0.665				
Activity	Activities	0.739	0.615	0.617	0.795	0.564
	Activities2	0.745				
	Activities3	0.769				
Affordability	Afford2	0.778	0.870	0.895	0.904	0.654
	Afford3	0.843				
	Afford4	0.731				
	Afford5	0.854				
	Afford6	0.832				
Ancillary services	Ancillary1	0.783	0.614	0.631	0.792	0.562
	Ancillary2	0.796				
	Ancillary3	0.661				
Intention	Intention1	0.838	0.804	0.807	0.885	0.719
	Intention2	0.874				
	Intention3	0.830				

### *Assessment of structural models*

The diagram in Figure 3 depicts the structural model for this study. T-values of the model show high efficiency in the construct, and the influences of independent to dependent variables are positively significant.

**Figure 3.** Assessment of structural models



**Table 8:** Results of structural model of the study

Relationships	Direct/indirect Effect	t-value	p value	Effect Size (f <sup>2</sup> )	Supported
Accessibility → Intention	0.350	9.462	0.000	0.159	Yes
Attraction → Intention	0.183	4.325	0.000	0.041	Yes
Activity → Intention	0.125	3.582	0.000	0.020	Yes
Affordability → Intention	-0.048	1.662	0.097	0.003	Yes
Ancillary services → Intention	0.185	4.934	0.000	0.037	Yes

As shown in Table 8 above, there are 5 independent variables employed in this study, including accessibility, attractions, activities, affordability and ancillary services, and 1 dependent variable being intention. The direct or indirect effect of these independent variables are accessibility (0.350), attractions (0.183), activities (0.125), affordability (-0.048) and ancillary services (0.185). Accessibility, attractions, activities and ancillary services have significant relationships with intention ( $p=.000$ ). However, affordability did not produce a significant correlation with intention ( $p=.097$ ). This data indicates that although affordability is insufficient, all other variables produced very good ranges.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The structural equation modelling of this study suggested that the independent variables of accessibility, attractions, activities and ancillary services produced positive influences on participants' intentions to choose Thailand as a MICE destination. Affordability was the only variable found to lack any influence on tourist intention. In order to identify the significance of MICE destination attributes from the perspective of MICE participants, respondents were asked to rate the importance of these attributes on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all important" to "very important". These attributes of MICE destinations were selected based on their relevance in previous studies and were clustered into six dimensions, including amenities, accessibility, affordability, ancillary services, attractions and activities. Rating these attributes from the perceptions of MICE tourism participants was designed to help the host destination identify strengths and weaknesses of its most unique attributes and thus increase attendance, satisfy participants' needs and maintain competition in the global MICE industry.

Descriptive analysis revealed that MICE participants positively perceived the importance of the selected destination attributes. Results indicate that the overall summated scores of such attributes were rated highly and perceived as important determinants of travel destination. The survey results indicate that the amenities factor, quality of event facility (product and services), quality of event space, distance between the airport and the event site or hotel, and leisure facilities produced the highest effects on participants' perceptions of the importance of MICE destination attributes. These were followed by destination accessibility, then attractions, activities, affordability, and finally, ancillary services as the least important MICE destination factor. These results support existing studies and are consistent with previous findings that MICE participants perceive amenities as the most important attribute followed by accessibility. Results also confirm prior research findings that the amenities factor is the most important perceived attribute among other MICE destination factors. The current data is also consistent with previous statements that amenities, accessibility and attractions are the most important destination attributes for potential meeting attendees. Likewise, results



support the conclusion that attractions and accessibility are the most important attributes for meeting planners in choosing their host destination.

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