COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS OF MEETING AND CONVENTION INDUSTRY IN THAILAND : SELECTED EXPERTS' OPNION

by

XUEJING ZOU

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business Administration in Tourism Management

Graduate School of Business
Assumption University
Bangkok, Thailand

March, 2007

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate' s Advisor and Committee Members/Examiners. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in Tourism Management in the Graduate School of Tourism Management of Assumption University of Thailand.

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Abstract

The Globalization trend results the higher level of competitiveness, This has affected Thailand the country that has been going through a harsh adaptation process as a meeting and convention venue. This research aimed at identifying the major competitors of Thailand, analyzing the competitiveness of Thailand and uncovering the competitive advantage of it by the selected experts' opinion.

In this research, Delphi technique was used as the research method to collect the expert opinions. In the questionnaire, 10 main indicators which contain 27 items were studied as indicators to measure national industry competitiveness; they are Facility/Infrastructure, Service, Affordability, Extra-conference opportunities, Environment, Destination management, Safety/Security, Technology, Accessibility and Destination image. Three round questionnaires were distributed to 18 experts from meeting and convention industry in Thailand. The respondents were asked to answer the questions according to their own experience and opinions.

From data analysis, it has been found that the major competitors of Thailand in meeting and convention industry are Singapore, Hong Kong and China. According to the selected experts' opinion, Singapore ranks number one in competitiveness, followed by Hong Kong, Thailand and China respectively. However, compared with other three countries, Thailand enjoys its own special competitive advantages in the attributes of pre-post tour, tourism attractions, location, pricing, and service quality.

From the research, it can be concluded that although Thailand faces severe competition and ranks a lower place among its rivals, it occupies unique attributes which could enhance its competitiveness. Special attentions should be paid to the area of improvement of local transportation, enhancement of the involvement of private sectors, improvement of destination image and increase of training and education. It is strongly recommended to explore the unique advantages and diminish the disadvantages so as to improve the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry of Thailand.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage, Competitive Analysis, Competitiveness, Convention, Meeting

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Ms Xuejing Zou

Bangkok, 5 March 2007

TABELE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Appendix

Chapter 1
Generalities of the study

1.1 Introduction of the Study

A special-interest tourist market that holds out great promise for continued growth well into the next century is that of MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition). Thailand's credentials as a popular world-class leisure travel destination and its rapidly-emerging status as a regional business hub have contributed significantly to the exponential growth of Thailand's MICE industry in the last decade. The fantastic culture, amazing scenery, smiling people, fabulous food, attract people from all over the world to experience this marvelous land, which contributes to the high development of tourism industry in Thailand. However, to promote Thailand as a quality destination, great effort should be put into MICE industry which brings quality tourists to the nation. In MICE industry, the meeting and convention (M&C) are two of the most important sectors. Nowadays; global competition determines the great importance of competitive advantage for different countries. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify the main rivals of Thailand in meeting and convention industry, and analyze the competitive advantage of Thailand among its competitors. For the first part, a brief introduction about MICE business is developed to answer the question: What is meeting and convention business? Then the paper introduces the meeting and convention business in Asia Pacific region and especially in Thailand, after which the focus is put on the meeting and convention industry in Thailand and the intense competition in this industry.

1.1.1 Introduction of MICE Business

The increase in MICE tourism over the last decade has received increasing attention from the public and private sector. MICE tourism is a term that encompasses four different components of business tourism: meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions-which are all separate activities (Spiller, 2003). MICE tourism is a sector that is a substantial contributor to the overall economic gains produced by the tourism industry. Some of the benefits of MICE tourism include employment and income to a region as well as investment in tourism infrastructure. MICE tourism also contributes to relationships between attendees and the hosts of the region. Promotion of a destination for future visitation is frequently a result of hosting a meeting or convention (Dwyer & Forsyth, 1997). MICE stakeholders include facilities, hospitality (accommodation and food and beverage), planners, transportation, technical services, and tour opportunities and entertainment (Dwyer & Mistilis, 1999).All the stakeholders should cooperate with each other to offer the best quality products to the consumers.

In MICE industry, the meeting and convention business are two of the most important sectors. By definition, meeting is the general term indicating the coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. Frequency: can be on an ad-hoc basis or according to a set pattern, as for instance annual general meetings, committee meetings, etc, the convention is participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving and consultation. As compared with a congress, a conference is normally smaller in scale and more select in character - features which tend to facilitate the exchange of information. The term "conference" carries no special connotation as to frequency. Though not inherently limited in time, conferences are usually of limited duration with specific objectives.

The meetings and convention industry has experienced positive consistent growth since the 1950's. Factors such as the increase in disposable income, the greater propensity to travel, increased leisure time and improvements in transportation and technology have all contributed to this growth.

There are four categories of Meeting: corporate, association, government, and independent. Corporate meetings tend to be smaller, generally fewer than one hundred attendees, and are mostly shorter in duration. They are usually held in hotels, conference center, training centers or universities. Corporate meetings most often have shorter lead times and require less preparation in planning (Crouch & Weber, 2003). Travelling to attend meetings is the primary reason for business travel. About twenty percent of all business trips are for the purpose of attending corporate meetings or conventions (Mill, 1990). Associations tend to hold the largest meetings and conventions throughout the world (Crouch & Weber , 2003). A variety of association meetings exist to promote the interests of their members including training and development programs, networking functions and seminars. Annual conventions can attract thousands of attendees and most often are held in top-tier cities or at resort locations (Crouch & Weber , 2003).

1.1.2 Meeting and Convention Industry in Asia-pacific Region

The convention and meetings industry are two of the major sectors of MICE industry, in this industry. Asia has seen rapid increase in industry activity since the late 1980s. In its latest projection, the Union of International Associations (UIA) predicts that only Asia will experience a positive 14.9 per cent growth in the next two years (UIA, 2005). In the Asia-Pacific region, the meeting and convention business grew by 124 per cent between 1980-1996 (Hutchinson,1997, pp.116), spawning proliferation of specialist facilities, sector-specific education and training, and dedicated development and marketing strategies at both national and regional levels. According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the number one international meeting and convention country in Asia Pacific is Japan, followed by Australia, Thailand ranks eighth. For the city holding meetings and conventions, Seoul had the highest number followed by Sydney and Singapore. Bangkok ranked 5th, 6th, 10th 8th, 3rd in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively (ICCA, 2003).

1.1.3 Meeting and Convention Industry in Thailand

The convention and meetings industry is a significant contributor to the economy of Thailand. With its strategic geographical location, Thailand has performed consistently well in attracting major conventions. In the 2004 *Meetings & Incentive Travel* magazine *Trends & Spends Survey*, cosmopolitan Bangkok, with a total of 4,320 delegate nights booked, was ranked fourth in the world's top ten most popular long-haul destinations for meetings and incentive travel. Bangkok was the only Asian city in the top ten. In the 2005 survey, Thailand ranked third in the top ten long-haul destinations by country with 5,250 delegate nights booked. According to the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) Statistics Report 2004, Thailand hosted a total of 64 international association meetings, 46 of which were held in Bangkok. In total, the city of Bangkok welcomed an estimated 70,640 participants, which ranks it seventh in the estimated total number of participants per city.

In the Conventions, Exhibitions & Incentives (CEI) Annual Industry Survey 2005, a total of 291 CEI professionals in the Asia-Pacific Region identified Thailand as their 'most favored destination' in 2004. With over 25 years of experience hosting regional and international meetings, incentive events, conventions and exhibitions, Thailand has a proven track record. International standards of efficiency and professionalism merge with the natural charm of the people who are world-renowned for their gracious hospitality, service-oriented and courteous nature. Indeed, it is a hallmark of a visit to Thailand that most people leave with a deep sense of respect and admiration for the people, their society and a culture in which modernity and progress co-exist in harmony with centuries-old traditions and wisdom.

There are at least 134 conference hotels and resorts around Thailand that are members of the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA) and the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TECB). These properties offer international-standard meeting facilities and services. Many are award-winning properties with high levels of service unmatched elsewhere in the world. Out of a total of approximately 43,000 rooms nationwide, 22,365 rooms or 38 per cent are in Bangkok, eight per cent in Northern and Central Thailand respectively and 20 per cent are predominantly in the beach resorts of Phuket and Krabi. All have meeting facilities of various sizes, while convention hotels are able to host mid-size conferences of 700-1,000 persons together with a wide range of banqueting options.

Table 1.1 The Convention Centers in Thailand

Name	Location	Space of Convention room (max)	No. of break out rooms	Reception Area
Bangkok Convention Centre (BCC)	Bangkok	2,506 sq.m. Auditorium 1,668 sq.m. Regency Area 1,225 sq.m. Vibhavadee Ballroom	8 rooms (56-120 sq.m	2,070 sq.m. Vibhavadee Ballroom & Foyer 600 sq.m. Outdoor Garden Area
Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Centre (BITEC	Bangkok	5,000-32,750 sq.m. Event Halls 101-106 1,780 sq.m. Grand Halls 201-203 2,097 sq.m. Meeting rooms 201-225	23 rooms (85-192 sq.m.)	11,634 sq.m. Concourse Area
Golden Jubilee Convention Hall	Khon Kaen	3,000 sq.m. Convention Hall	4 rooms (100-3,000 sq.m.)	
Impact Arena, Exhibition & Convention Center (IMPACT)	Bangkok	12,000 sq.m.	30 Rooms (162 – 230 sq.m.)	19,700 sq.m.
Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall (PEACH)	Pattaya	4,851 sq.m.	9 rooms (40-140 sq.m.)	Over 12,000 sq.m.
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (QSNCC)	Bangkok	6,500 sq.m.	11 rooms (40 -4,500 sq.m.)	3,800 sq.m. Reception Hall A, Main Foyer, Plaza
Royal Paragon Hall	Bangkok	3,000 sq.m. Paragon Hall 1, max. 2,800 people max. 1,440 people	5 rooms (50-70 sq.m.)	2,000 sq.m. Foyer Area
United Nations Convention Centre (UNCC)	Bangkok	1,400 sq.m. ESCAP Hall Meeting A-H	14 rooms (50-1400 sq.m.)	2,100 sq.m. Reception / Exhibition

Sources: Data of 2002 from the Tourism Authority of Thailand

Thailand is now home to eight world-class convention and exhibition centers (Table 1.1). Thailand offers six world-class conference venues, the largest of which can easily cater to a conference of over 10,000 persons with breakout meeting facilities, dedicated exhibition space, the latest communications technology, a variety of dining options and countless other supporting services. For conferences of less than 700 persons, organizers have a choice of four and five-star convention hotels in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Hua Hin, Phuket and Northeast Thailand. These offer both meeting facilities and accommodation combined with excellent service. However, other places have fewer chances to hold the international conventions. (Figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1 Numbers of International Meetings and Participants in Thailand by Provinces, 2001-2002 and 2004

Province	2001				2002				2004			
	No. of Events	No. of Participants			No. of Event	No. of Participants			No. of Events	No. of Participants		
		Foreign	Local	Total		Foreign	Local	Total		Foreign	local	Total
Central Region	**537**	**86,543**	**62,830**	**23,71**	**953**	**90,158**	**78,005**	**12,153**	**1,091**	**163,717**	**129,83**	**3,883**
Bangkok and the peripheral	466	1,942	29,166	22,776	873	85,255	73,53	1,302	1,001	52,698	20,255	2,443
Prachuap Khirikhan (Hua-Hin)	42	1,502	1,110	392	46	1,775	1,346	429	47	4,876	3,985	891
Phetchaburi (Cha Am)	29	3,099	2,554	545	30	2,783	2,534	249	30	5,339	4,914	425
Central Region (Other)	-	-	-	-	4	345	172	173	13	804	680	124
North Region	**113**	**13,362**	**9,700**	**3,662**	**159**	**15,713**	**11,853**	**3,860**	**125**	**20,095**	**15,241**	**4,854**
Chiang Mai	83	0,747	7,510	3,237	149	15,180	1,423	3,757	109	18,929	14,430	4,49
Chiang Rai	27	1,575	1,170	405	7	453	362	91	14	1,014	716	298
North Region (Other)	3	1,040	1,020	20	3	80	68	12	2	152	95	57

South Region	**339**	**23,215**	**20,732**	**2,483**	**329**	**27,216**	**24,2**	**3,01**	**331**	**31,224**	**24,947**	**6,2**
Phuket	280	9,626	17,967	1,659	293	23,742	2,329	1,413	258	25,080	20,697	4,38
Songkhla (Hat Yai)	27	1,831	1,668	163	14	2,023	1,036	987	42	3,257	2,132	1,12
Surat Thani	28	1,298	847	451	19	721	691	30	18	998	734	264
Krabi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	1,464	1,070	394
South Region (Other)	4	460	250	210	3	730	148	582	6	425	314	111
East Region	**71**	**12,2 97**	**9,019**	**3278**	**101**	**38,626**	**26,7 39**	**11,8 87**	**98**	**51,724**	**42,038**	**9,68**
Chonburi (Pattaya)	67	2,17	8,940	3,233	96	38,362	6,50	1,862	94	51,362	41,743	9,61
• East Region (Other)	4	124	79	45	5	264	239	25	4	362	295	67
North East Region	**6**	**1,0 09**	**672**	**337**	**9**	**1,250**	**44 3**	**80 7**	**19**	**2,075**	**1,534**	**541**
Khon Kaen	3	350	116	234	6	734	397	337	11	1,140	821	319
North East Region (Other)	3	659	556	103	3	516	46	470	8	935	713	222
Total	**1,066**	**136, 426**	**102,95 3**	**33,473**	**1,5 51**	**172,96 3**	**141, 244**	**31,7 19**	**1,66**	**268,835**	**213,594**	**5,24**

Remark: The peripheral area include Nontaburi, Samutrprakarn, Patumtanee and Nakornpratho

Sources: Data of 2002 from the Tourism Authority of Thailand

Regarding the revenue of meeting and convention business in Thailand, there is a trend that the length of meeting is becoming shorter for corporate meeting. The average expense per person per day does not change, but the total revenue decreases. Referring to non corporate convention (association and government), the length of the participants' stay does not change too much. The statistics for the person who spends an average amount of money stays comparatively stable. So increasing the number of non-corporate conventions is the key to generate more revenues in this area. (Figure 1.2)

Figure 1.2 Overview of Revenue from Meeting and Convention Business during 2002-2004 in Thailand.

	Overview of Travelers	2002	2003*	2004	% Change (2003-2004)
Corporate Meeting					
M	Number of Convention Participants (persons)	70,035	64,432	91,838	42.53%
M	Number of Conventions (events)	722	664	757	13.96%
M	Length of Stay	7.99	7.99	5.50	
M	Average expense/person/day (U$)	264.93	264.93	264.93	
M	Average expense/person (U$)	2,116.79	2,116.79	1,457.12	
M	Estimated Revenue (U$)	148,249,437	136,389,482	133,818,527	-1.89%
M	Estimated Revenue (Baht)	6,367,313,305	5,658,799,597	5,553,468,885	-1.86%
Association and Government : Non Corporate					
C	Number of Non - Corporate Participants (persons)	71,209	65,512	121,756	85.85%
C	Number of Conventions (events)	829	763	907	18.87%
C	Length of Stay		7.99	7.99	7.8
C	Average expense/person/day (U$)		264.93	264.93	264.93
C	Average expense/person (U$)		2,116.79	2,116.79	2,066.45
C	Estimated Revenue (U$)	150,734,549	138,675,785	251,603,173	81.43%
C	Estimated Revenue (Baht)	6,474,048,877.6	5,753,658,321	10,441,531,688.8	81.48%

Sources: Data of 2002 from the Tourism Authority of Thailand
Data of 2003 from the estimation
Data of 2004 from the survey of 381 Hotels, Convention centers, Exhibition centers, Entrepreneurs, PCOs, PEOs, DMCs, Forwarders, Contractors, and Hosts

Note: Exchange Rate Year 2002 1 US$ = 42.95 Baht
Year 2003 1 US$ = 41.49 Baht
Year 2004 1 US$ = 41.50 Baht

1.2 Statement of the problem

One of the consequences of globalization trend is the higher level of competitiveness. This intense competition exists in every field including the meeting and convention business. Thailand is a well-known tourism country which has the finest and best-equipped venues for meeting and convention business in Southeast Asia, yet its potential has not been fully discovered and developed. Concerning the regional campaign launched by The Tourism Authority of Thailand in which they set up a rivalry with major players Singapore and Hong Kong to promote the Kingdom of Thailand as Southeast Asia's premier convention and exhibition hub, Thailand should try to siege the opportunity to increase its regional competitiveness in meeting and convention business among other rivals as a determinant for the success by identifying its competitive advantages and then exposing itself to international competition.

13 Research Aims & Objectives

This dissertation has the main aim of analyzing the competitiveness of Thailand as a meeting and convention venue among its major rivals.
In order to achieve this aim the following objectives have been set:
a) To identify the major competitors in meeting and convention business of Thailand.
b) To measure competitiveness of Thailand as a venue for meeting and convention industry.
c) To identify Thailand's competitive advantages and disadvantages.

1.4 Scope of the research

The study is conducted within the national meeting and convention organizations in Thailand. It emphasizes the professionals working in the meeting and convention organization who have sound knowledge and experience in meeting and convention industry. Therefore, the scope of the research is within Thailand meeting and convention industry, such as the experts from convention centers, hotel meeting halls, government meeting and convention organizations and associations and academicians.

1.5 Limitations of the research

There are many limitations on the study that have been deliberately imposed:
A. Secondary data will be collected from the tourism organizations in Thailand; there is a problem of lack of access to the information in other countries, especially the main competitors that will be discussed in the research. Even within Thailand, getting the present data due to some bureaucratic constraint may be a problem as well. The data available about meeting and convention business in Thailand is limited too.

B. Primary data will be collected from national meeting and convention organizations of Thailand, some biases may occur about the perception of national competitiveness in meeting and convention business in Thailand compared to other countries, due to the absence of the experts' opinions from other countries.
C. The dynamic characteristic of venue competitiveness is so changeable that the result of this research may not be precise.

1.6 Significance of the study

The goal of this study is to obtain information and compare Thailand as a meeting and convention venue to other major competitors and analyze their different competitive advantages in the market, so as to provide managerial implications in order to formulate successful strategies for government and stakeholders in meeting and convention business in the future. The study could support the government with valuable source of information, help them to improve their performance and being more competitive in meeting and convention industry and achieve their goals.

1.7 Definition of terms

The following terms are applied in the study, for a better clarity and uniformity:

- **Competitive Advantage**: A competitive advantage is an advantage over competitors gained by offering consumers greater value, either by means of lower prices or by providing greater benefits and service that justifies higher prices

- **Competitive Analysis**: It is used in marketing to describe the process a company or individual uses to assess competition.

- **Competitiveness:** The ability of a nation or firm to sell competitive goods or services in international trade.

- **Convention**: Participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving and consultation. As compared with a congress, a conference is normally smaller in scale and more select in character - features which tend to facilitate the exchange of information. The term "conference" carries no special connotation as to frequency. Though not inherently limited in time, conferences are usually of limited duration with specific objectives.

- **Meeting**: General term indicating the coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. Frequency: can be on an ad-hoc basis or according to a set pattern, for instance annual general meetings, committee meetings, etc

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter is one of the main parts of the dissertation. It offers a thorough literature review over the two cornerstones of the study: the competitive analysis and the meeting and convention industry. To achieve the aim of the research, it is of vital importance to understand comprehensively these two topics and their current situation.

2.1 Literature Review on Meeting and Convention Industry

2.1.1 Perspective on MICE Business

The Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sector of tourism is rapidly growing around the world. Once referred to as CEMI by Fenich (1998), the convention, exposition and meetings industry is ever changing. Many benefits from MICE tourism can be recognized, including among others its contribution to: employment and income in a region, the generation of investment in tourism/recreation infrastructure, the support of the formation of relationships between firms, the upholding of national interest and international cooperation, the allowance for training and educational opportunities, the facilitation of the exchange of new ideas and technology, the establishment of valuable scientific, business, professional and social contacts, and the promotion of a country or region as a tourist destination for vacation travel (Dwyer & Forsyth, 1997).

2.1.2 Type of Meeting and Conventions

A meeting is "a conference, workshop, seminar, or other event designed to bring people together for the purpose of exchanging information" (Montgomery & Strick, 1995). Most often, conferences and conventions are an important component of travel and tourism in a region (Grado et al., 1998). The convention industry used to be regarded as one of the most stable sectors of the tourism industry.

The meetings market can be separated into two categories: association meetings and corporate meetings. These two types of meetings have subsets that may be grouped as follows: trade shows, reunions organized for social purposes, regional meetings, and special events, which are typically public gatherings with an entertainment focus (Abbey & Link, 1994).

The Type of Meetings:

- Seminar: Usually one face to face group sharing experience in a particular field under the guidance of an expert
- Workshop: Usually a general session and face to face group of participants training each other to gain new knowledge, skill or insight into problems.
- Clinic: Usually a general session and face to face small group, but may have general sessions where staff provide most of the training resources to train in particular subject
- Panel: Two or more speakers each stating a viewpoint with discussion between speakers, discussion is guided by a moderator
- Lecture: A formal presentation by an expert sometimes followed by a question and answer period.
- Colloquium: A program in which the participants determine the matter to be discussed. The leader then would construct the program around the most frequent problems with equal emphasis on instruction and discussion.

The Type of Conventions:

- **Forum**: A panel discussion sharing opposite sides of an issue by experts in a given field with liberal opportunity for audience participation.

- **Symposium**: A panel discussion by experts in a given field before a large audience, some audience participants but appreciably less than a forum
- **Institute**: General Sessions and face to face groups' discussion several facts of subject. Primarily a substitute for formal education where staff provides most of the training resources.
- **Conference:** Usually general session and face to face groups with high participation to plan, get facts, solve member problems.
- **Convention:** usually a general session and committee meetings, mostly information giving and accepting minutes from annual meeting.
- **Congress:** More commonly used European designation for convention, mainly international in scope.

There are four categories of Meeting: corporate, association, government, and independent. Corporate meetings tend to be smaller, generally fewer than one hundred attendees, and are mostly shorter in duration. They are usually held in hotels, conference center, training centers or universities. Corporate meetings most often have shorter lead times and require less preparation in planning (Crouch & Weber, 2003). Travelling to attend meetings is the primary reason for business travel. About twenty percent of all business trips are for the purpose of attending corporate meetings or conventions (Mill, 1990). Associations tend to hold the largest meetings and conventions throughout the world (Crouch & Weber). A variety of association meetings exist to promote the interests of their members including training and development programs, networking functions and seminars. Annual conventions can attract thousands of attendees and most often are held in top-tier cities or at resort locations (Crouch & Weber).

2.1.3: The Study of Meeting and Convention Industry

A review of past research efforts in a particular field provides an understanding of that field's research issues and the boundaries of a discipline. This effort is particularly valuable in a relatively new and developing field: the convention and meeting sector, where few indicators delineate the maturity and sophistication of a field (Reid and Andereck, 1989; Baloglu and Assante, 1999).

Over the past decades, the growth of the meeting and convention industry has sparked an awareness of the economic significance of conventions to local, state, and national economies. Authors, both industrial and academic, agree that conventions are a major contributor to regional and national economies (Crouch and Ritchie, 1998; Rutherford and Kreck, 1994). Not only do conventions contribute economically to their host destinations, but they also accelerate the growth of overall travel and tourism activities through repeat visits and word of mouth communications (Rutherford and Kreck, 1994).

However, many researchers have observed that the existing industry data and statistics on the economic impact of meetings and conventions have been underestimated for several reasons. First, published figures provide only national totals and therefore fail to record the regional impact of meeting and convention activities (Zelinsky, 1994). Second, tracking total meeting and convention spending by delegates, sponsors, or exhibitors is difficult (Kim *et al.*, 2003). Third, published data almost always fail to distinguish meetings and conventions from trade shows, expositions, incentive travels, and other types of meetings, which makes it difficult to gauge the exact influence of meetings and conventions on the host community (Fenich, 1998; Crouch and Ritchie, 1998). Lastly, reported data often underestimate the fact that nearly 70 percent of meeting and convention attendees combine business and family leisure. Therefore, the total impact of meeting and convention activities is much larger than the spending associated with attending a meeting or convention (Braun, 1992; Grado *et al.*, 1998: Kim *et al.*, 2003). Each dollar of convention-related spending initiates a broad set of economic interactions that produce additional spending in other sectors of a region's economy (Braun, 1992), and thus the economic impact of meeting or conventions can be doubled or tripled because of the extensive indirect influence on host cities' economies. Crouch and Ritchie (1998) noted that, given these shortcomings and the obvious difficulty of measuring the true impact of the meeting and convention industry, existing estimates of the size of the industry should be treated and interpreted with great caution.

Although some of the studies in this area were not conducted impartially, those studies with a systematic approach helped estimate the size of the meeting and convention industry and, specifically, helped destinations legitimize public support for meeting and convention development projects by endowing it with an aura of substantial economic benefits (Crompton and McKay, 1994).An overall review of convention research published in hospitality and tourism journals across regions has not been conducted to date.

2.1.4 Convention and Meeting Site-Selection Indicators

2.1.4.1 Site-Selection Process

The meeting site selection is the critical moment for both associations and host destinations. While the individual traveler is the key decision-maker for pleasure travel, association members typically do not have input in site selection for their annual meetings or conventions (Baloglu and Love, 2001). Instead, association executives and meeting planners play a key role in the selection of a meeting site. For associations, the choice of a meeting destination significantly influences attendance level, which in turn determines the success or failure of the meeting. For host destinations, understanding meeting planners' site-selection processes helps them position themselves appropriately in the convention market, personalize meeting services for target meetings and conventions, and therefore attract more meetings. Because of this reason, the subject of the site-selection process has drawn considerable interest from both meeting buyers and meeting suppliers. Particularly, identifying meeting planners' perceptions and preferences of site-selection criteria has been a main research topic in this area.

There is certain to be great deal of variation in the structure of the convention site selection progress. Despite the probably wide variations in the site selection process, there emerge from the existing literature a number of similarities. Table2. 2 attempts to identify these in the presentation of a general conceptual model of the process involving five steps:

Step 1: Convention preplanning: before a site is investigated, some level of preplanning must occur to initiate the process; numerous site selection factors may affect this step

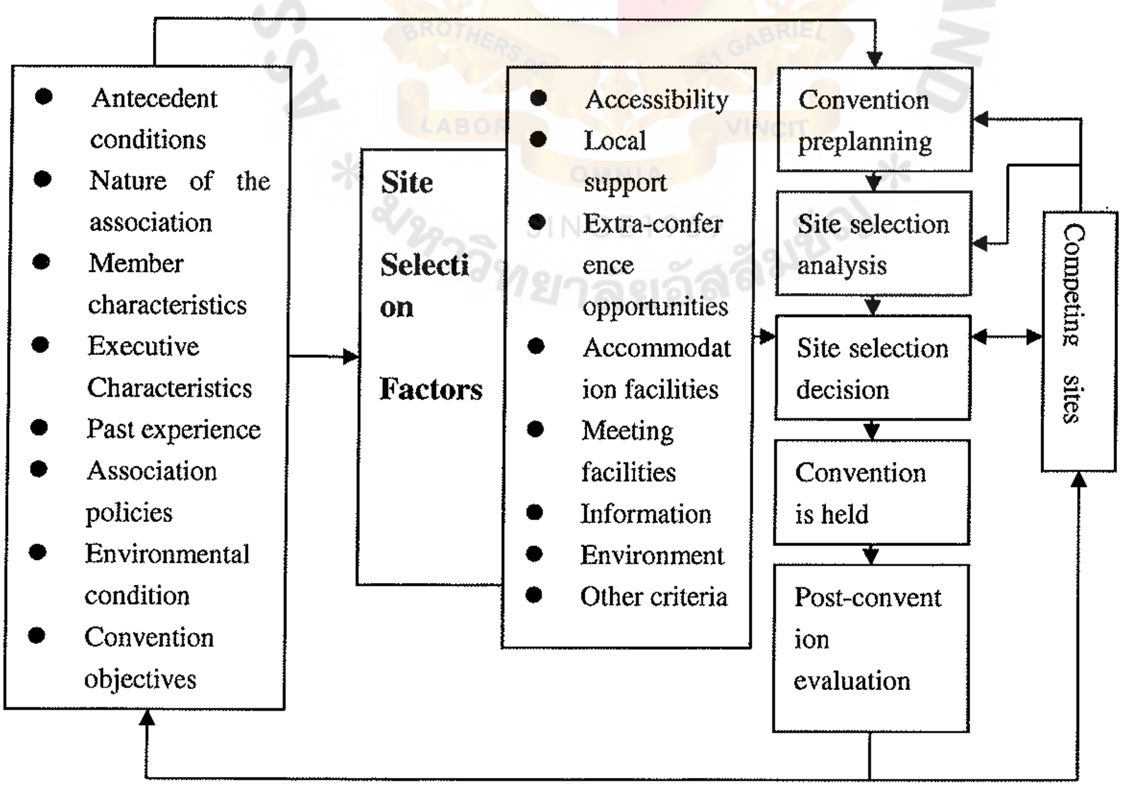
Step 2: Analysis of recommendation: gather details of information from a range of possible sites which meet the minimum requirements as defined by certain key site selection factors

Step 3: the final site selection decision: usually performed by the executive or board of directors based on the meeting planner's or selection committee's recommendations

Step 4: the convention is held

Step 5: the post-convention evaluation: Undertaken and which enters the site selection process as an antecedent condition for the next convention, the evaluation may also govern the potential set of competing sites for future conventions.

Table2. 1 A general conceptual model of the site selection process



(Sources: Baloglu and Love, 2001)

2.1.4.2 The Site Selection Indicators

As competition in the convention industry grows, it becomes more critical for destinations and facilities to identify key destination factors influencing associations' site-selection decisions and to develop marketing strategies based on those identified factors (Go and Govers, 1999). A review of relevant literatures indicates that most publications attempting to identify important site-selection factors appeared to report similar findings. Major site selection factors frequently identified in empirical studies include "accessibility", "availability of facility", "quality of service", "affordability", "destination image", "attractions/entertainment", and "safety/security".(Table2.3) Particularly, adequacy of physical facilities and accessibility appear to be the two most important factors for meeting planners when they select meeting sites. The physical convention facility is closely related to the basic meeting considerations: meeting size, anticipated volume of meeting attendance, purpose of the meeting, and predilections of attendees. Meeting planners select the physical facility that can meet these basic requirements of the meeting. On the other hand, potential attendees may be disappointed if the site cannot be reached quickly and comfortably (Zelinsky, 1994). The issue of accessibility is also relevant to cost, which has been identified as a main inhibitor of meeting participation in many previous studies (Oppermann, 1995). The farther attendees have to travel, the more they have to spend. As a way of dealing with accessibility, associations whose members are broadly dispersed often rotate their convention sites annually to provide all members with legitimate traveling distances.

Many convention literatures on site-selection criteria have focused not only on identifying the perceived importance of an attribute to association meeting planners, but also on their evaluation of performance for identified convention attributes. In fact, destinations and facilities have been forced to re-examine their image and service quality as perceived by professional meeting planners (Bonn *et al.*, 1994). A review of literature in this area reveals that many researchers used the importance-performance analysis (IPA) to evaluate destination or facility performance for important attributes affecting meeting planners' site decision-making. Because of its applicability to various areas of the convention sector, such as targeting association meeting planners, presenting bids, and creating product and promotion strategies, the IPA has been used extensively by researchers (Baloglu and Love, 2003).

While most site-selection studies made some effort to identify important site-selection factors, some research went further to understand the dynamics of convention site selection. Hu and Hiemstra's (1996) study evaluated how trade-offs are made among site-selection factors. They found that price was the most important factor and subsequently suggested that pricing strategy is the key for the destinations and facilities in competing effectively in the highly saturated meeting market. Bonn *et al.* (1994) examined the differences in the attributes and services sought by association and corporation meeting planners. Their findings showed that there were no significant differences between corporate and association meeting planners with respect to the facilities and services, while significant differences occurred with respect to various recreational activities. With 15 relevant attributes selected based on previous studies, Oppermann (1998) compared large-half and small-half meeting planners' perceptions of destination attributes affecting their decision-making. The results of Oppermann's study proved that meeting planners' perceptions of destination attributes are very similar regardless of meeting size. Obviously, these research efforts enhanced the knowledge in this area.

Table2. 2 Site Selection Factors

Category	**Dimensions**
Local support	➢ Local chapter—the extent of assistance by the local association ➢ CVB/Convention center---planning, marketing ,and promotion ➢ Subsidies---the extent to which the destination offers to defray costs through subsidies
Accessibility	➢ Cost and Time—the money and duration of access ➢ Convenience—Air and ground transportation

	➢ Barriers—the extents of any travel formalities: visa, customs, etc.
Accommodation	➢ Capacity---the number of rooms available ➢ Cost---the cost of accommodation at the site ➢ Service---the standards of services ➢ Availability—all the facilities available when required ➢ Security—safe and security environment
Meeting facilities	➢ Capability---ability of site to provide suitable sized facilities ➢ Layout—suitability of the layout ➢ Ambience---the ability to create a appropriate atmosphere ➢ Services---the perception of standard services ➢ Security---a safe and secure meeting space ➢ Availability-- all the facilities available when required
Information	➢ Experience---past satisfactory experience ➢ Reputation---destination image and reputation ➢ Marketing---the effectiveness of destination marketing
Site environment	➢ Climate---the desirability of destination's climate ➢ Setting---the attractiveness of surroundings ➢ Infrastructure---the suitability and standard of local infrastructure ➢ Hospitality---the extent to which the host community and organization to welcoming visits
Extra-conference opportunities	➢ Entertainment—restaurants, theaters, nightclubs… ➢ Shopping---malls, major department stores… ➢ Sightseeing---attractions, museums, architecture… ➢ Recreation---activities, sports.. ➢ Professional opportunities—business deals, selling
Other criteria	➢ Risks---the possibility of strikes, disasters or other adverse events ➢ Profitability---the extent to which the site would produce a profit for the convention ➢ Promotion---would the site ass credibility to the association and build membership ➢ Novelty---the extent to which the destination represents a novel location for the nest convention

(Sources: Go and Govers, 1999)

Despite the prevalent interest in meeting and convention tourism marketing and management, however, research on the subject seems to remain relatively in the infant stage. This is most evident in the absence of vigorous research efforts in attitudinal scale development and on-going construct validation in the filed. The importance of reliable and valid (convergent and discriminates) scales is well documented in the literature as a catalyst for theory development and subsequent knowledge development

2.2 Perspectives on 'Competitiveness'

In academia, interest in competitive analysis and global strategy has been strong in the last two decades. Numerous perspectives have been proposed to examine the issue, and so have numerous prescriptions for industry or businesses facing global competition. On the one hand, these perspectives have enriched our understanding of the complexity of competing globally. On the other hand, the diversity of perspectives creates a great deal of ambiguity and confusion about how to compete worldwide, about the definition of competitive advantage, about why a business chooses a global strategy, and about the implications of that choice. Without a unified framework to integrate these diverse perspectives, ambiguity and confusion are likely to persist, leading to contradicting theories and discouraging practical application of knowledge.

Although it is widely acknowledged that economic growth and competitiveness involve a complex interactive process of social, political, and institutional change, no one general theory supports this phenomenon. Rather, various explanations have been offered from different disciplines. The literature reveals a variation in perspective in defining, understanding, and measuring competitiveness. Perspectives from various disciplines reveal that competitiveness is a multi-faceted concept. We can regard the notion of competitiveness as associated with three major groups of thought. These are:
(1) Comparative advantage and/or price competitiveness perspective (Bellak, 1993; Hilke & Nelson, 1988; Porter, 1990; Rugman & D'Cruz, 1993).
(2) A strategy and management perspective (Day&Wensley, 1988; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Porter, 1985, 1990, 1999; Porter & Millar, 1985; Powell, 1992a, 1992b).

(3) A historical and socio-cultural perspective (Aaker, 1989; Franke et al., 1991; Hofstede&Bond, 1988; Kennedy, 1987; Porteretal., 2001)

While economists have placed emphasis on price and the country-specific economic characteristics of competitiveness, the management and strategy researchers have focused on the firm-specific characteristics, while the focus of sociologists and political theorists has been on various social, political and cultural characteristics underlying the notion of competitiveness. Moreover, each group has suggested different indicators to explain or measure competitiveness (Moon & Peery, 1995; Wahee duzzaman & Ryans, 1996).

In line with this perspective, there have been many attempts to empirically derive "generic" competitive strategies (Miller, 1986; Kim and Lim, 1988). Many of these conceptualizations have been influenced by the work of Porter who first published a book on *Competitive Strategy* (1980) followed by *Competitive Advantage* (1985). Porter asserted that in order to derive a competitive strategy, the organization must first evaluate its position within the industry against five factors: power over buyers, power over suppliers, barriers to entry in the industry, the threat of substitute products, and the overall level of rivalry within the industry.

The definitions offered in the literature provide both a micro and a macro connotation of 'competitiveness'. From a macro perspective, competitiveness is a national concern and the ultimate goal is to improve the real income of the community. On this perspective, Competitiveness is a very broad construction encompassing all social, cultural, and economic variables affecting the performance of a nation in international markets. Reflecting this macro perspective, competitiveness may be defined as the degree to which a country can, under free and fair market conditions, produce goods and services which meet the tests of international markets while simultaneously maintaining and expanding the real income of its people over the longer term (Global Competition: the new Reality. Report on the President's Commission on

Industrial Competitiveness, 1985).

On the other hand, from a micro perspective it is seen as a firm-level phenomenon: firm-specific behaviors determine competitiveness. Porter's competitive analysis framework (Porter, 1980) emphasizes industry attractiveness and its characteristics, such as the potential to enhance the firm's power vis-à-vis buyers and suppliers, the potential entrants and to oust competitors, as being the key determinants of competitive advantage and long-term profitability. By contrast, the 'resource-based' approach emphasizes that the roots of competitive advantage reside in the acquisition and maintenance of the core competencies of an organization. 'Resource-based' theorists have emphasized inimitable firm 'resources' and the distinctive capabilities and competencies resulting from combining these resources as being central to obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Barney (1991)defines a firm's sustained competitive advantage as the implementation of a value-creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors and when these competitors are also unable to duplicate the advantages based on such a strategy. Core competence provides potential access to a wide variety of markets, makes a significant contribution to the perceived customer benefits of the end products, and is difficult for others to imitate. Core competencies are sustained through some kind of 'isolating mechanisms' maintained by firms (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Rumelt, 1984).

On the micro perspective, in order to be competitive, any organization must provide products and services for which customers or clients are willing to pay a Fair return or price. In the long run, in a free enterprise system, competitiveness is measured by the ability of the organization to stay in business and to protect the organization's investments, to earn a return on those investments, and to ensure jobs for the future.

Thus, despite the extensive literature on competitiveness, no clear definition or model has yet been developed. It is a complex concept because a whole range of factors account for it. Competitiveness is both a relative concept (i.e. compared to what?) and is multi-dimensional (i.e. what are the salient attributes or qualities of competitiveness?) (Spence&Hazard,1988). On both the micro and macro perspectives there is recognition that firms and nations face different challenges and priorities as they move from resource-based to knowledge-based economies. Thus, the principal factors that contribute to global competitiveness, and thereby improve living standards, will differ for economies at different levels of development (Porter etal, 2001).

Regardless of the specific definitions offered, the notion of competitiveness does, however, appear to be centered on human development, growth and improved quality of life (Newall, 1992).For a company, competitiveness means the creation of new growth options that create value for shareholders. For a society, improved competitiveness translates into new jobs and better living conditions (World Economic Forum, 2001). Wealth creation is the engine of economic growth and a main spring of innovation. The ultimate goal of competitiveness is to maintain and increase the real income of its citizens, usually reflected in the standard of living of the country. From this perspective, the competitiveness of a nation is not an end but a means to an end; its ultimate goal is to increase the standard of living of a nation under free and fair market conditions (through trade, production, and investment) (Cho, 1998).

2. 3 Destination Competitiveness

2.3.1 Perspectives on Destination Competitiveness

Destination competitiveness would appear to be linked to the ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists. Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000a) state that 'tourism competitiveness is a general concept that encompasses price differentials coupled with exchange rate movements, productivity levels of various components of the tourist industry and qualitative factors affecting the attractiveness or otherwise of a destination'(Dwyer *et al.*, 2000a: 9).

Recently, two international tourism journals have devoted entire issues to the theme of destination competitiveness. The journal *Tourism* in a special issue, *Competitiveness in Tourism and Hospitality* (Volume 47 (4), 1999), featured articles which addressed price competitiveness by journey purpose (Dwyer *et al.*), the international competitiveness of Croatia's hotel sector (Cizmar & Seric; Osmagic-Bedenik); the role of public administration in the competitiveness of Spain's tourism industry (Bueno); and the competitiveness of Alpine destinations (Pechlaner). The journal *Tourism Management*, in its special issue *The Competitive Destination* (Volume 21 (1), February 2000), included articles that address destination price competitiveness (Dwyer *et al.*), competitiveness variables in the area of destination policy, planning and management (Crouch &Ritchie), overall destination competitiveness (Buhalis; d'Hauteserre; Go &Govers), competitiveness and transport (Prideaux), and competitiveness and the environment (Mihalic).

A large number of variables appear to be linked to the notion of destination 'competitiveness'. These include objectively measured variables such as visitor numbers, market share, tourist expenditure, employment, value added by the tourism industry, as well as subjectively measured variables such as 'richness of culture and heritage', 'quality of the tourism experience' etc. Thus, for example, competitiveness has been defined as 'the ability of a destination to maintain its market position and share and/or to improve upon them through time' (d'Hartserre, 2000: 23). Hassan defines competitiveness as 'the destination's ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors' (Hassan, 2000: 239).According to other researchers, destination competitiveness is associated with the economic prosperity of residents of a country (Buhalis, 2000;Crouch &Ritchie, 1999). This is consistent with the view espoused by the World Economic Forum (Porter *et al.*, 2001).Development designed to attract international visitors may have a range of purposes. Ultimately, however, it seems reasonable to focus attention on economic prosperity. That is, nations (or destinations) compete in the international tourism market primarily to foster economic prosperity of residents. Other objectives may hold, of course – the opportunity to promote the country as a place to live, trade with, invest in, do business with, play sports against, etc. Tourism may foster international understanding, peace, and good will. But, in the long term, the economic well-being of residents is of central concern

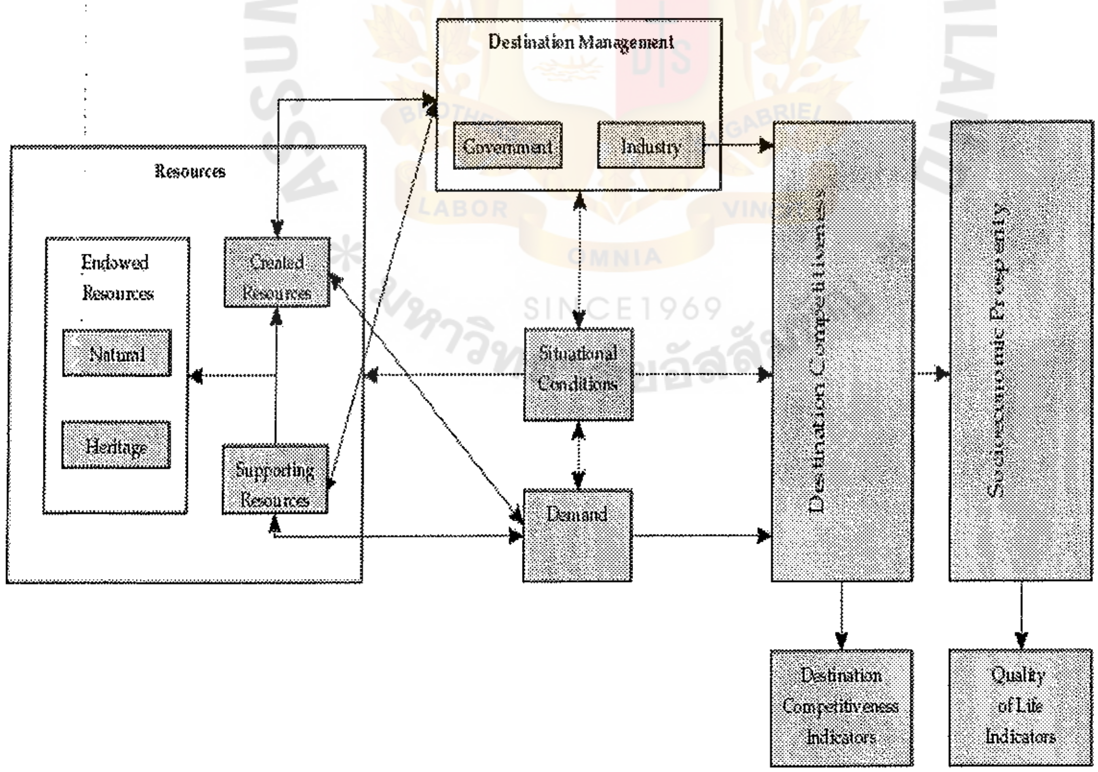
Poon (1993) suggests four key principles which destinations must follow if they are to be competitive: put the environment first; make tourism a leading sector; strengthen the distribution channels in the market place, and build a dynamic private sector. Clearly these principles are too broad and general to be meaningful to tourism stakeholders and policy makers. Go and Govers (1999), in a study of conference site selection, measures a destination's competitive position relative to other destinations along seven attributes: facilities, accessibility, quality of service, overall affordability, location, image, climate and environment, and attractiveness. The selected attributes appear not to be based on any model of competitiveness and, in any case, apply specifically to the conventions sector of tourism.

2.3.2 The Model of Destination Competitiveness

A model of destination competitiveness has been developed by Ernie Heath who claims that: existing models do not appear to adequately provide an integrated treatment of the various issues surrounding the concept of 'competitiveness' and do not place sufficient emphasis on the key success drivers (people) and the vital linkages (e.g. communication and information management)that need to be considered when developing a comprehensive framework of sustainable destination competitiveness (Heath, 2003). This model is displayed schematically in Table 2.3.

In Table 2.4, the *Resources* category is divided into two types: Endowed (inherited) and *Created.* Endowed Resources, in turn, can be classified as Natural (mountains, lakes, beaches, rivers, climate etc.) and Heritage or Cultural (cuisine, handicrafts, language, customs, belief systems etc.). Created Resources include tourism infrastructure, special events, and the range of available activities, entertainment and shopping. In the model presented here, Supporting Resources (or enabling factors) include general infrastructure, quality of service, and accessibility of destination, hospitality and market ties. Endowed and Created Resources are each allocated their own box, as is Supporting Factors and Resources. As Crouch and Ritchie state, 'Whereas the core resources and attractors of a destination constitute the primary motivations for inbound tourism, supporting factors and resources exert more of a secondary effect by providing a foundation upon which a successful tourism industry can be established' (1999: 148). These include general infrastructure, quality of service, accessibility of destination,

Table 2.3: The main element of destination competitiveness



(Sources : Ernie Heath, 2003)

Table2.4 : Selected Indicators of Destination Competitiveness

The indicators of Selected Indicators of Destination Competitiveness
● ***Endowed Resources***
Natural resources
Culture/Heritage resources
● ***Created Resources***
Tourism infrastructure
Range of activities
Shopping
Entertainment
● ***Supporting Factors***
General infrastructure
Quality of service
Accessibility of destination
Hospitality
Market ties
● ***Destination Management***
Destination management organization
Destination marketing management
Destination policy, planning, development
Human resource development
Environmental management
● ***Situational Conditions***
Competitive (micro) environment
Destination location
Macro environment
Safety/Security
● ***Market Performance Indicators***
Indicators of economic prosperity
Tourism investment
Price competitiveness indices
Government support for tourism

(Sources : Ernie Heath, 2003)

No single table could list all of the dimensions of competitiveness or the associated indicators. Here some of the main dimensions and indicators are listed. More research needs to be devoted to distinguishing the different types of measures appropriate to the different indicators of competitiveness.

2.4 The Competitive Advantage Analysis of Meeting and Convention Industry

2.4.1 Regional Competition of Meeting and Convention Industry

One consequence of globalization trend is the higher level of competitiveness. in MICE industry, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and China have established many famous convention centers, For example, Singapore has four Dedicated Convention Centers (DCCs),with the latest to open being the Singapore International Convention and Exhibitions Center(SICES), Bangkok completed the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center(QSNCC),and has recently opened the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Center(BITEC). In some of these locations, governments have funded support to encourage international convention business. Asia is an increasingly popular destination for incentive travel, with destinations such as Hong Kong and Singapore pursuing this market for the past 20 years in recognition of its high yield (Asian Association of Convention and Visitors Bordeaux, 1995). The Philippine Convention and Visitor Corporation estimates that incentive travellers spend on average $US 1,200 in the country and stay for 5.6 nights (Asian Association of Convention and Visitors Bordeaux, 1995)

From the table 2.6, it is clear that the major meeting and convention destinations in Asia are Australia, Japan, and Singapore, which rank the first top three countries in 2003, followed by Korea, Thailand, China and Hong Kong, China. While, for the top meeting cities in Southeast, the first three are Singapore, Bangkok and Hong Kong (Table 2.6). In 2004, the Thai tourism officials launched a regional campaign to promote the kingdom as Southeast Asia's premier convention and exhibition hub, setting up a rivalry with major players Singapore and Hong Kong. Singapore and Hong

Kong have long been well-known as the one of the best MICE venues in the world. Besides, China, as a new competitor, is developing very fast and has played a more and more important role in MICE industry. While some small countries like Vietnam, still have great potential in this area. The competition in MICE industry is becoming more and more intense. Therefore, the identification of the major rivals is necessary to the strategy development of MICE industry in Thailand and enhances its competitiveness.

Table 2.5: Number of meeting per country, Market 2003

Rank	Country	#Meetings
1	Australia	117
2	Japan	112
3	Singapore	75
4	Republic of Korea	60
5	Thailand	57
8	P.R.China	37
9	Hong Kong, China	34

(Sources : ICCA, 2004)

Table 2.6: Number of meetings per city in 2003

	City	#Meetings
1	Singapore	75
2	Seoul	36
3	Bangkok	34
4	Hong Kong	34
5	Melbourne	31
6	Beijing	17
7	Tokyo	14

(Sources : ICCA, 2004)

2.4.2 The Present Study on the Competitive Analysis of Meeting and Convention Tourism

While the discussions of competitiveness in general literature are useful in highlighting the various determinants of 'firm' or 'national' competitiveness, they do not address the special considerations relevant to determining tourism 'destination' competitiveness. The discussion of competitiveness in general literature has tended to stress competitive advantage (resulting from value-added activities by firms and organizations), while de-emphasizing comparative advantage as a source of international competitiveness. For the tourism industry, comparative advantage would relate to inherited or endowed resources like tourism infrastructure (hotels, attractions, transport network), festivals and events, the quality of management, skills of workers, government policy and soon. In the context of tourism industry, both comparative advantage and competitive advantage are important and a model of competitive analysis must recognize this.

The notion of competitiveness should be consistent with the notion of 'competitiveness' in international economics and international business literature. Accordingly, the literature on international competitiveness was critically reviewed with a view to developing a framework suitable for tourism research. Comparative advantage is dynamic and changes over time as suggested by the well-known Product Cycle Theory. The concept has found numerous applications in tourism as experts studied the progression of a tourist attraction (resort) by applying stage-theoretic framework (for example, .Tourist Area Life Cycle. theory).

From a lot of influential articles, we can tell that great attention was paid in destination competitive analysis; Studies by tourism researchers put their effort on the destination branding analysis, destination site selection process, tourism firms' developing strategy and so on. Empirical Studies highlight the importance of levels of technology, exchange rates, government policies, industry competition, and the influence of multinational enterprises as factors influencing the competitiveness of tourism firms (Dwyer, Forsyth& Rao, 2000 a, b, 2002).

Despite its position as a significant market for the tourism industry in most parts of the world, the competitive analysis of meeting and convention tourism, and for the purpose of this project, has been subject to very limited research by scholars (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001, Uriely & Reichel 2000). The research conducted has mainly been carried out by the industry and they have tended to focus on conference and meeting planners and the importance they ascribe to attributes influencing their choice of destination or hotel (Oppermann, 1996). The current literature, unfortunately, only offers limited insight into what a competitive advantage means to a meeting and convention industry. Ambiguous and confusing findings exist in the literature which discourages application of the knowledge in practice. In addition, the literature lacks a unified theoretical foundation on which prescriptions can be made for effective competition in global industries. This also significantly undermines the future research efforts aimed at enhancing our understanding of global competition for meeting and convention industry.

2.5 Conclusions

Although existing studies have identified important factors or criteria affecting the competitiveness of a meeting and convention venue, there is a more pressing need to understand the relative role of the various venue-selection factors and how they affect the competitiveness of a nation as a successful meeting and convention venue. Identifying important factors unique to the development of meeting and convention industry and the circumstances surrounding a particular convention selection decision can help destinations position themselves wisely in the competitive meeting and convention market. A review of literature reveals that Thailand meeting and convention industry research is very scarce. There should be more systematic and theoretical research approaches to study the meeting and convention industry in Thailand, Based on the comprehensive findings, a theoretically sound model of meeting and convention competitive advantage analysis will ultimately help venue meeting planners or governors in striving for highly attended meetings and conventions. Therefore, there is a necessity to study the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand.

Chapter 3

Research Frameworks

In this chapter, the researcher takes the theories from the literature review to develop the conceptual framework. There are two parts in this chapter; the first part of this chapter is the theoretical framework of the research. The theoretical framework refers to the theories being used as a basis or reference for the study which are drawn from the literature. The second part is the conceptual framework developed together with the explanation of the different indicators.

3.1 Theoretical frameworks

The theoretical framework is a conceptual model of how one theorizes the relationship among the several factors that have been identified as important to the problems (Sekaran, 1992). In the research, two tables are selected as the theoretical frameworks: the selected indicators of destination competitiveness and the site selection process.

Table3.1 : Selected Indicators of Destination Competitiveness

The indicators of Selected Indicators of Destination Competitiveness
● ***Endowed Resources***
Natural resources
Culture/Heritage resources
● ***Created Resources***
Tourism infrastructure
Range of activities
Shopping
Entertainment
● ***Supporting Factors***
General infrastructure

Quality of service
Accessibility of destination
Hospitality
Market ties
● ***Destination Management***
Destination management organization
Destination marketing management
Destination policy, planning, development
Human resource development
Environmental management
● ***Situational Conditions***
Competitive (micro) environment
Destination location
Macro environment
Safety/Security
● ***Market Performance Indicators***
Indicators of economic prosperity
Tourism investment
Price competitiveness indices
Government support for tourism

Table3. 2 Site Selection Factors

Category	**Dimensions**
Local support	➢ Local chapter—the extent of assistance by the local association ➢ CVB/Convention center---planning, marketing ,and promotion ➢ Subsidies---the extent to which the destination offers to defray costs through subsidies
Accessibility	➢ Cost and Time—the money and duration of access ➢ Convenience—Air and ground transportation ➢ Barriers—the extents of any travel formalities: visa, customs, etc
Accommodation	➢ Capacity---the number of rooms available ➢ Cost---the cost of accommodation at the site ➢ Service---the standards of services ➢ Availability—all the facilities available when required ➢ Security—safe and security environment
Meeting facilities	➢ Capability---ability of site to provide suitable sized facilities ➢ Layout—suitability of the layout ➢ Ambience---the ability to create a appropriate atmosphere ➢ Services---the perception of standard services ➢ Security---a safe and secure meeting space ➢ Availability-- all the facilities available when required

Information	➢ Experience---past satisfactory experience ➢ Reputation---destination image and reputation ➢ Marketing---the effectiveness of destination marketing
Site environment	➢ Climate---the desirability of destination's climate ➢ Setting---the attractiveness of surroundings ➢ Infrastructure---the suitability and standard of local infrastructure ➢ Hospitality---the extent to which the host community and organization to welcoming visits
Extra-conference opportunities	➢ Entertainment—restaurants, theaters, nightclubs… ➢ Shopping---malls, major department stores… ➢ Sightseeing---attractions, museums, architecture… ➢ Recreation---activities, sports.. ➢ Professional opportunities—business deals, selling
Other criteria	➢ Risks---the possibility of strikes, disasters or other adverse events ➢ Profitability---the extent to which the site would produce a profit for the convention ➢ Promotion---would the site ass credibility to the association and build membership ➢ Novelty---the extent to which the destination represents a novel location for the nest convention

(Sources: Go and Govers, 1999)

There is no specified theoretical framework that lists all of the dimensions and indicators to analyze the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry for a country. Those factors which are listed in the table 3.1 and table 3.2 are being selected and grouped so that those suitable indicators can be applied in this field to identify the national meeting and convention competitiveness among rivals.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is developed based on the previous empirical research, relevant theories, and the author's experience. The main objective of this study was to examine the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand. A conceptual framework was developed from the theoretical framework.

Table 3.3 The Attributes of Competitiveness of Meeting and Convention Industry

Attributes \ Countries		Thailand			
1.Facility/ Infrastructure	Convention center facility				
	Hotels meeting halls				
2. Service	Service quality/ minded				
	Training and Education				
	Professional stuff				
3.Affordability	Finance viability				
	Meeting facilities' capacity				
	Availability of stuff				
	Accommodations				
	Catering				
4.Extra-conference Opportunities	Tourist Attractions				
	Pre-post tour				
	Entertainment/Activities				
5.Environment	Economical				
	Social-cultural				
	Ecological				
6.Destination Management	NTO/Association Marketing and Promotion				
	Corporation Management				
	Rules and Regulation				
	Pricing				
7.Safety/	Safety status				

Security	Risk & Crisis management				
8.Technology	Implementation of I.T				
	Innovation				
9.Accessibility	location				
	Local Transportation				
	Barriers (VISA, customs, ect)				
10.Destination Image					

1. Facility/Infrastructure

The infrastructure is the most important factor in an international tourist's experience of the venues; it is the core resources that attract people coming to attend the meeting. Resources and created resources indicate that the mere existence of such resources is insufficient to generate visitation to a destination in the absence of infrastructure.

2. Service

The service dimension of the tourism experience is vital. Efforts must be made to ensure quality of service and there is now recognition of the need to take total quality of service approach to visitor satisfaction (Go & Govers, 2000). Provision of reliable and responsive visitor services enhances a venue's competitive advantage. Initiatives to enhance the quality of the experience provided by a tourism destination include: service quality, training and education, skilled workers. Venues have become increasingly reliant on the delivery of quality products and services. Since meeting visitor needs and achieving business goals are increasingly inseparable, a commitment to quality by every enterprise in a meeting and convention center is necessary to achieve and maintain international competitiveness.

3. Affordability

Meeting and convention industry should provide the required products to the customer; a venue's affordability includes features such as accommodation, finance viability food services, and the capacities of meeting facilities. The supplier of the meeting and convention should be able to satisfy the customer requirements.

4. Extra-conference opportunities

Extra-conference opportunities are 'value added' by a meeting and convention destination. The customer comes to a destination not merely for a meeting, the extended benefit such as pre-post tour, entertainment/activities and tourist attractions that they can enjoy will add great value to this venue and be a unique competitive advantage.

5. Environment

The wider external environment impact upon venues competitiveness, wider external environment relate to economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, political, legal, governmental, regulatory, technological, and competitive trends and events that have an impact on the way firms and organizations in the destination do business, and present both opportunities and threats to their operations. The conduct and performance of these institutions depends on the overall structure of the industry in which they are situated.

6. Destination management

Destination Management factors are those that 'can enhance the appeal of the core resources and attractors, strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the supporting factors and resources and best adapt to the constraints imposed by the [situational conditions]' (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999: 149). The category includes the marketing and promotion of NGO and associations, corporation management, rules and regulation, pricing. When implementing their marketing activities, destination management organization can contribute to the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage.

7. Safety/Security

Safety and security within a destination can be a critical qualifying determinant of its competitiveness. Elements include: social stability which may include unrest, probability of terrorism, crime rates, record of transportation safety, corruption of police/administrative services, quality of sanitation, prevalence of outbreak of disease, quality/unreliability of medical services, and availability of medication. Therefore, risk & crisis management is very importation too. Issues of security and safety are now firmly established as key elements of venues competitiveness.

8. Technology

Technological forces represent major opportunities and threats that must be considered in formulating strategies (Poon, 1993). Technological change can create new markets, change relative cost positions in an industry, reduce or eliminate cost barriers between businesses, create shortages in technical skills, result in changing values and expectations of employees, managers, customers, and create new competitive advantages. Taking advantage of new technologies and the Internet can also enable the meeting and convention industry to enhance their competitiveness.

9. Accessibility

Destination location determines the physical distance from markets and must affect travel time from origin markets, even allowing for changes in transportation technology. A destination's location, particularly from major source markets, has much to do with its ability to attract visitors. McKercher (1998) notes that more proximate destinations exhibit a competitive advantage over destinations that offer a similar product but are more accessible. The accessibility of the destination is governed by a variety of influences including the location, air and local transport, barriers of entry so that tourist choice between alternative destinations is influenced by inefficiencies in the accessibility.

10. Destination image

An important function of destination marketing managers is to create a destination image that is 'the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place' (Kotler et al., 1993). How the customer perceives the destination will influence their decision making. Enhancing the appeal of a destination is very importation to develop the meeting and convention industry in a country.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodology used for the research project and tries to provide a reason for adopting a specific approach. The selection of the more suitable methods to complete the aim and objectives of a research is essential (Moore, 1983). In order to create the research framework, the aim of this research is repeated and the objectives are also re-stated. Subsequently, the different methods of gathering secondary and primary information are analyzed; finally, limitations both in the method used and in the research process are described to identify difficulties found by the writer during the collection and analysis of the data.

4.1 Research Aim and Objectives

This research is focused on the study of the attributes of Thailand as a Meeting and Convention venue which influences its competitiveness among its major rivals. After analyzing them, new solutions and alternatives will be given. A more competitive destination with more attractions for the consumers with the intention to increase their number will be given. Thus, the objectives covered by this research are:

1: To analyze the different influences on the attendees' decision-making process in selecting a meeting and convention place.

2: To examine the characteristics of meeting and convention business both in Thailand and in its competitors.

3: To identify the meeting and convention participator's perception and their expectations.

To be able to answer the previous question and fulfill the research objectives, the research has been carried out through different approaches.

4.2 Collections of Data

A qualitative methodology was employed in this study by obtaining the data from a secondary and primary data collection method.

4.2.1. Secondary Data

Secondary sources is defined as "data that already exists and was collected for some other purpose but can be used a second time in the current project" (1992: 69). Secondary data collection is a necessary first step in any research design before starting with primary data collection, as there is no point in collecting information that already exists (Finn et al., 2000; Cooper et al., 1998). Although this exciting data will not provide, in most cases, all the information needed by the researcher, it will give interesting ideas for the study (Smith, 1995).

The chief advantage is the fact that secondary data is inexpensive (or even free), can be obtained with less effort than primary data, and can be analyzed in less time. Secondary data is often longitudinal, allowing the researcher to look for trends and changes over time. Furthermore, they provide a point of reference for comparing with primary data, making possible a later interpretation and understanding (Jennings, 2001).

These advantages are balanced by some significant disadvantages, which must be kept in the researcher's mind: (1) Inconveniences with data accuracy as the data was gathered for another purpose; (2) The data may be outdated; (3) Secondary data are indirect measures of problems or concerns, in that they do not reveal individual values, beliefs, or reasons that may be underlying the responses; (4) Some documents may not be easy to locate (Jennings, 2001).

Secondary data was compiled to provide a better understanding on the topic of research, to establish hypotheses and to compare purposes.

To collect information from books and articles, a research on MICE Tourism, association and corporate decision making processes in M&C business, marketing mix and tourism characteristics and the competitive analysis between Thailand and in its major competitors was conducted.

Secondary sources used for the research includes tourism specialized magazines, newspaper articles, industry reports (such as annual report of tourism in Thailand by TAT), Internet articles, tourism conference presentation papers and textbooks. Research monographs, university dissertations, and from the Internet: such as the web sites of organizations Tourism authority of Thailand(TAT), the world tourism origination(WTO), Thailand convention and exhibition bureau (TCEB) and so on.

4.2.2. Primary Data

According to Jennings (2001), primary data is information collected first hand by the researcher for the specific purposes of the researcher's current project. A researcher may need to use primary data collection methodology when data needed has not been collected before or is not available.

The methodology conducted in this study to collect the primary data was the Delphi technique. Delphi technique was originally conceived as a way to obtain the opinion of experts without necessarily bringing them together face to face. In Educating for the New World Order by Bev Eakman, the reader finds reference upon reference for the need to preserve the illusion that there is "Lay, or community, participation in the decision-making process while in fact lay citizens are being squeezed out'. This technique aimed at building an agreement, or consensus about an opinion or view, without necessarily having people meet face to face, for example through surveys, questionnaires, emails etc. This technique, if used effectively, can be highly efficient and generate new knowledge. The Delphi method in this research is used to determine the main factors or indicators that may contribute to the national competitiveness of meeting and convention in Thailand among its rivals. This method is a series of written questionnaires, with feedback and comments from experts. They will evaluate different qualities of venue conditions or competitiveness.

4.2.2.1 The Delphi Method

The Delphi technique has been described as 'a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem' (Linstone & Turoff)

The Delphi technique was developed by the RAND Corporation in the late 1960's as a forecasting methodology. Later, the U.S. government enhanced it as a group decision-making tool with the results of Project HINDSIGHT, which established a factual basis for the workability of Delphi. That project produced a tool in which a group of experts could come to some consensus of opinion when the decisive factors were subjective, and not knowledge-based.

Delphi is particularly appropriate when decision-making is required in a political or emotional environment, or when the decisions affect strong factions with opposing preferences. The tool works formally or informally, in large or small contexts, and reaps the benefits of group decision making while insulating the process from the limitations of group decision-making; e.g., over-dominant group members, political lobbying.

Sample Size and Panel of Experts

From a scrutiny of relevant research literature it is clear that there is no fixed rule as to the number of experts required to form the Delphi panel, nor is there a consensus on the knowledge or expertise required for one to be included as a Delphi member. Delphi panels range from tens to hundreds. For Cavalli-Sforza and Ortolano (1984) a "typical Delphi panel has about 8 to 12 members" while for Phillips (2000) "[t]he optimum size of the panel is seven to twelve members". For a policy Delphi, Turoff (1970) suggests "anywhere from ten to fifty people". The size of Delphi panels reported in past studies covers a wide range from tens to hundreds. The choice depends on the nature, scope and importance of the study.

Definition of Expert

It is important to define experts, they are often assumed to be professionally or scientifically qualified and/ or to have achieved high status, an early study on the future of communication services in the residential market used an "expert" panel of housewives (Linstone, 1978). Pill (1971) suggested that an "expert" should be defined as anyone with a relevant input, de According Cantrill et al. (1996), the definition [of an expert] should include any individual with relevant knowledge and experience of a particular topic.

Number of Rounds

Feed-back to respondents and the opportunity to revise earlier responses are arguably defining features of Delphi. Such provision obviously requires at least two rounds. Beyond that the number of rounds required is disputed and individual studies have been found using two, three, four and even five rounds.

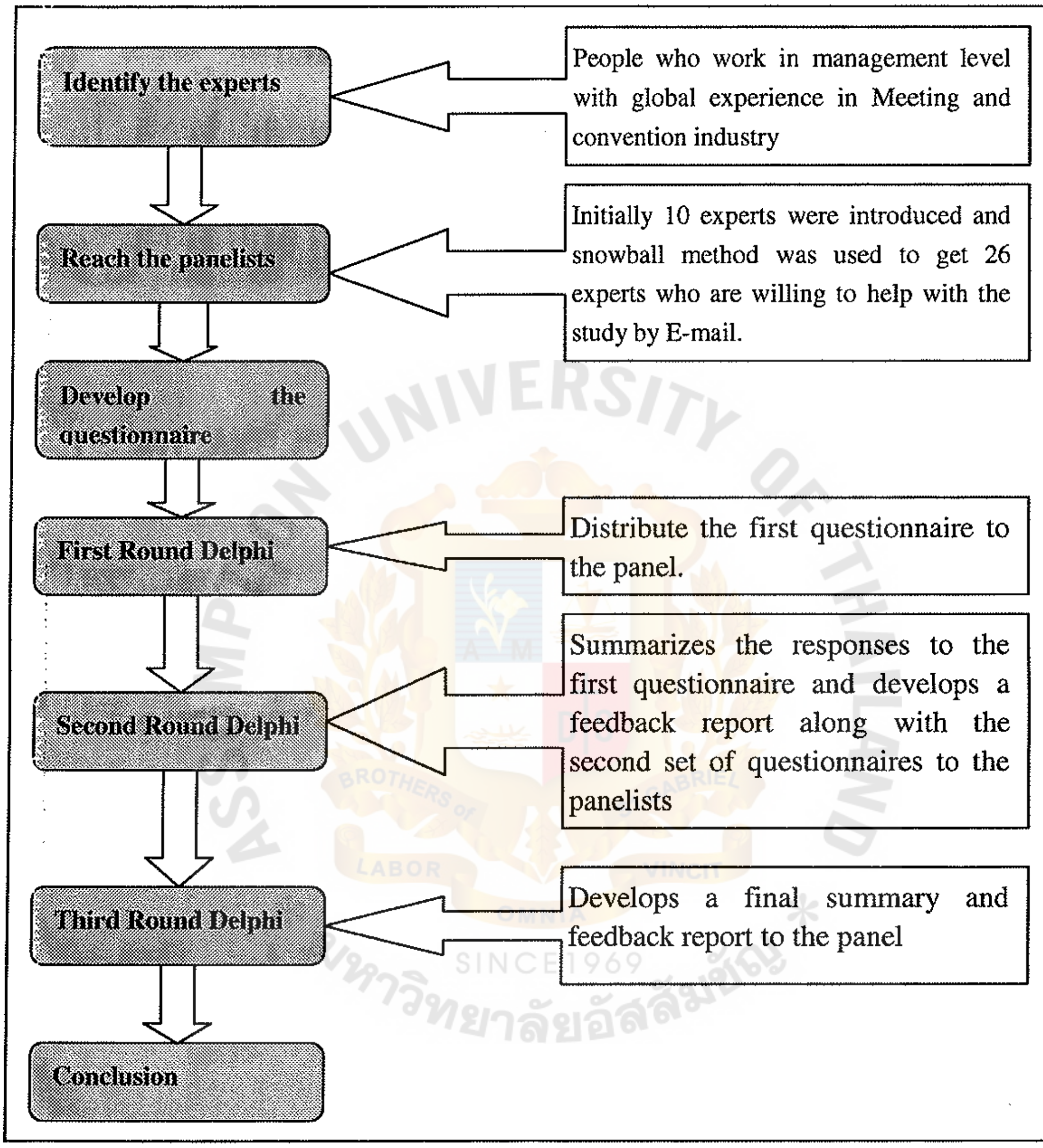
4.2.2.2 Process of Delphi Method

The basic method as described by Delphi technique is

1. Develop initial questionnaire and distribute it to the panel.
2. Panelists independently generate their ideas in answer to the questionnaire and return it.
3. The moderator (i.e. the researcher) summarizes the responses to the first questionnaire and develops a feedback report along with the second set of questionnaires for the panelists.
4. Having received the feedback report, panelists independently evaluate earlier responses and independently vote on the second questionnaire.
5. The moderator develops a final summary and feedback report to the group and decision makers.

In this research, the flowchart of process of Delphi is as follows:

Table 4.1 Flowchart of process of Delphi being used in this research



4.2.2.3 Strengths and Weakness of Delphi Technique

There are several advantages to the Delphi technique. One of the most significant is its versatility. The technique can be used in a wide range of environments, e.g., government planning, business and industry predictions, volunteer group decisions.

Another important advantage lies in the area of expenses. For example, the Delphi technique saves corporations money in travel expenses. They do not have to gather participants from several points of the globe in one place to resolve a problem or predict the future, yet they still can generate relevant ideas from the people best suited to offer their expertise. This is particularly beneficial to multinational corporations, whose executives and key personnel may be based in cities as far apart as Melbourne, New York, Tokyo, Buenos Aires, and London. The technique also protects participants' anonymity. Thus, they feel better protected from criticism over their proposed solutions and from the pitfalls of "groupthink", i.e., the withholding by group members of different views in order to appear in agreement.

On the other hand, the technique has its drawbacks. The Delphi technique is somewhat time consuming, which renders it ineffective when fast answers are needed. It might also be deficient in the degree of fully thought-out resolutions, people acting together in a group setting benefit from others' ideas. Thus, there might be more insight and pragmatic resolutions to problems offered by people in interactive settings, e.g., through the nominal group technique, in which participants are gathered in one place but operate independently of one another. However, in situations where time is not of essence or group interaction is not important, these disadvantages diminish in importance.

Another drawback to using the Delphi technique is that it can be difficult for researchers to design an effective study. As with survey and other respondent-dependent research designs, the results from a Delphi study are determined in a large part by how they are framed and conducted. For example, the study coordinator may inadvertently railroad dissenters on the expert panel into accepting the consensus view before allowing them to express potentially important ideas that might otherwise change the consensus. Similarly, if the study coordinator is summarizing each participant's responses, care must be taken that the full breadth and depth of each expert's comments is recorded for the others to respond to.

4.2.2.4 Prominent Existing Delphi Studies in the Tourism Field

In the leisure, recreation and tourism field, many applications of the Delphi technique in have been reported in literature. One such study is by Dyck and Emery (1970), where six panels, each addressing a different subject area, were formed to forecast the future distribution of work and leisure time and the most likely use of this leisure time in Alberta, Canada. Two rounds of questionnaires were conducted and the final results were summarized to provide forecasts, dates and trends. In addition, Yong et al. (1988) have used a two-stage procedure to determine a future environmental scenario and the factors which will allow Singapore to compete successfully in the international tourism market. Other applications of the Delphi technique in leisure, recreation and tourism can be found below.

Table 4.2 Lists of Delphi studies in tourism field

Year	Author	Study
1970	Dyck&Emery	The Delphi technique in forecast the future distribution of work and leisure time in Alberta, Canada
1980	Edgell, D.L., Seely, R.L. and Iglarsh, H.J	Forecasts of International Tourism to the USA
1980	Seely, R.L., Iglarsh, H.J., and Edgell, D	Utilizing the Delphi Technique at International Conferences: A Method for Forecasting International Tourism Conditions
1988	Yong, Y.W., Keng, K.A. and Leng, T.L	A Delphi Forecast for the Singapore Tourism Industry: Future Scenario and Marketing Implications
1994	Kanynak & Macauley	The Delphi Technique in the measurement of the tourism market potential: the case of Nova Scotia
1998	Susanne Padel, Peter Midmore	The development of the European market for tourism products: insights from a Delphi study
2001	Miller, Graham	The development of indicators for sustainable tourism: results of a Delphi survey of tourism researchers.
2003	Heribertus Andre Purwangugraha	Identification and rank of regional competitiveness among city and regencies in the special region of Yogyakarta province(Indonesia)

4.3 Sampling Procedures

4.3.1 Target Population

Population element is the individuals on which the measurement is taken, and the population is the total collection of elements about which we wish to make some inferences (Cooper and Schindler, 2000).

For this study, the sample population is focus on the experts working in the meeting and convention organizations in Thailand, the experts here are defined as those who work in the management level with a global experience in meeting and convention industry or the professors in the institutions or universities, so as to collect their opinions about the competitiveness advantages of meeting and convention business in this country.

4.3.2 Sample Unit

The sample element and unit of this research is the experts working in the M&C organizations in Thailand. In this research, questionnaires are distributed to the experts in Thailand on appointed days. The researcher received the first resources of 10 experts recommended by one of the professor in tourism department of Assumption University in Thailand; they are from TECB, TECA, Thai Airways, Universities, hotels resort. After that, snow balling method was used to reach more experts get involved in this study. Totally the number of potential panelists is 26; therefore, there are 26 copies of questionnaires to be distributed to them by Email in an electronic format.

4.3.3 Population Frame

The population frame refers to a number of elements to be investigated in the study. In this research, the populations frame consists of a list of all the members working in the meeting and convention industry. Such as convention centers, hotel meeting halls, government MICE organizations and associations and tourism institution.

4.3.4 Research Instruments

The instrument of this research is the questionnaire, which is designed for the primary purpose of describing and /or predicting some phenomenon. It is a structured sequence of questions designed to draw out facts and opinions and which provides a vehicle for recording the data (Hague and Jackson, 1996).

The questionnaire used in this research was designed purposely to serve this research topic by the researcher. An evaluation scale was developed to measure the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand. The evaluation scale comprises of a number of questions and is coded on the five-point item scale. All scales follow the same pattern which are: 5 represents very good , 4 represents good, 3 represents average, 2 represents a poor and 1 represents very poor.

See Appendix 1, 2for the questionnaires.

4.3.5 Gathering Procedures

In this research, there are three rounds Delphi conducted the procedures for gathering data

1st round: Develop initial questionnaire and distribute it to the panel to identify the major competitors of meeting and convention industry in Thailand. As well as collect the respondents' information.

2nd round: Summarizes the responses to the first questionnaire and develops a feedback report along with the second set of questionnaires for the panelists

3rd round: Develops a final summary and feedback report to the panel.

For this study, the questionnaire will be sent through e-mail

4.4 Data analysis

4.4.1. Analysis of Secondary Data

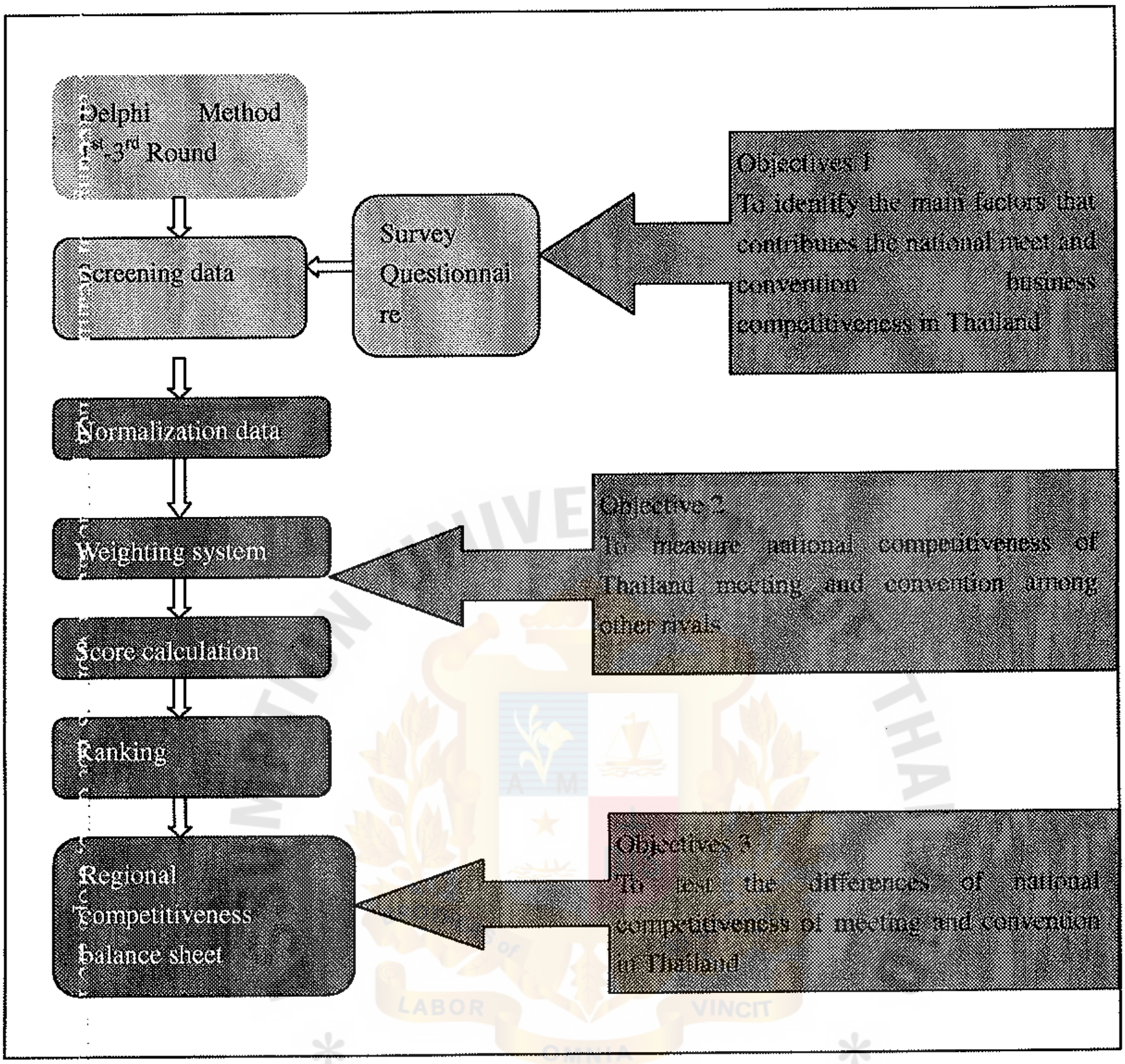
"When carrying out secondary research, you are not just collecting and reproducing it in a similar or identical form." (Finn et al 2000). On the contrary, the data needs to be arranged to address the author's objectives. Secondary data analysis represents interpretations, conclusions, or additional knowledge about the information collected (Veal, 1992).

The secondary data analysis carried out within this dissertation involves data, quantitative data, as well as mixed data sets of both types. The approaches used to analyze the available secondary data are very varied, including the "reading" of texts, the examination of theories, the interpretation of statistics and previous research on the subject.

4.4.2 Delphi Method

Competitiveness score for every country is measured by using the sum of weighted variable for both primary and secondary data that have been transformed into weighted normal standard value. The higher the weighted normal standard value, the higher competitiveness the region has. Competitive ranking for selected countries is calculated by comparing each weighted variable score that has been normalized. By the score calculation, ranking, in making the national competitiveness balance sheet, a criterion in the form of numbers is required to filter advantages and disadvantages variables of the country.

Table 4.3 Summary of Data Analysis



Chapter 5

Presentation of Data and Critical Discussion of Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data analysis based on the result of Delphi study that was undertaken to identify the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand and uncover the competitive advantage of it. Also, the findings are illustrated and discussed in this chapter.

5.1 Summary of Respondents' Profiles

5.1.1 Summary of Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique in this research is used to analyze the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand, this method is a series of written questionnaires, with feedback from the experts' opinions. They evaluate different attributes and indicators of meeting and convention industry, the result will be used to identify the competitive advantage of meeting and convention industry in Thailand.

The Delphi panel is formed by a group of experts in meeting and convention industry in Thailand. First, the profile of Delphi panel will be described and will be followed by the presentation of data and the analysis of the results from each of the three Delphi rounds.

5.1.2 Profile of the Delphi Panel

The research needs to decide on the qualified participants who will be included in the Delphi as panelists. The Delphi must also be able to determine how many panelists are necessary. If the group of panelists is fairly homogeneous, then ten to fifteen participants are sufficient. If differences of opinions are expected, the size of panel will be increased to ensure balance (Kyung-Hwan Kim, 1998).

5.1.2.1 Summary of the Response Rate

In this research , the panelists consisted of the experts from convention centers, hotel meeting halls, government meeting and convention organizations and associations and academicians. Invitations to serve on the panel were distributed to 10 potential experts at the very beginning. Then the snow balling method was used to find more experts from meeting and convention industry. And E-questionnaire was distributed to process it. The initial ten experts introduced more experts into the panel. A total of 26 experts were invited to get involved in this research. From these 26 potential panelists, 18 people responded as participants in the first round panel. Table 5.1 represents the response rates of each group.

Table 5.1 Summary of the 1st Round Response Rate

Group	Initial Sample	First Round Panel	Response Rate
Experts from M&C Organizations and associations	7	4	57.14%
Experts from convention centers/ Hotel meeting hall	9	7	77.8%
M&C Planners/ Organizer	6	4	66.7%
Academicians/Researcher	4	3	75%

In round 2 and round 3 of the Delphi study, all participants of round 1 returned the questionnaires. Table 5.2 represents the response rates of each group.

Table 5.2 Summary of the 2nd and Final Round Response Rates

Group	Initial Sample	2nd and 3rd Round Panel	Response Rate
Experts from M&E Organizations and associations	4	4	100%
Experts from convention centers/ Hotel meeting hall	7	7	100%
Academicians/Researcher	4	4	100%
M&C Planners/ Organizer	3	3	100%

5.1.2.2 Profile of the Delphi panelists

Position

The 18 panelists selected are all experts from convention centers, hotel meeting halls, government M&C organizations and associations and academicians. 72.2% of them are in the position of manager or general manager, while the other 27.8% are academicians or researchers from higher education institution and M&C associations. As shown in table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Position

Position	Number	Percent
General Manager/ Manager	13	72.2%
Academicians/ Researcher	5	27.8%

Working Period

The panelists that participate in this research are all experts with a sound experience working in meeting and convention industry for a long period of time, from the table 5.4, there are 22.3% of them have been working in this area for 5-8 years, 44.5% for 9-12 years and 33.4% of them devoted themselves to it more than 12 years above.

Table 5.4 Working period

Working Period	Number	Percent
5-8 Years	4	22.3%
9 -12Years	8	44.5%
12 Years and above	6	33.4%

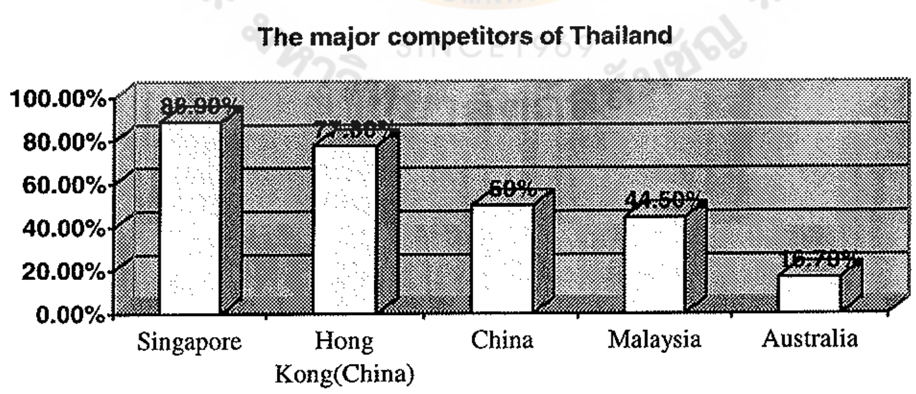
5.2 Statistical Analysis

The results of each Delphi round will be analyzed to identify the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand.

5.2.1 The First Round Delphi

The task of the Delphi panel for the first round was to uncover the major competitors of meeting and convention industry of Thailand. In the first round Delphi, panelists were asked to write down the major competitors of Thailand in meeting and convention industry their independent opinions. The outcome of the panel's round 1 is as follows:

Figure 5.1 The Major Competitors of Thailand in Meeting and Convention Industry



From the table, it is clear to see that the major competitors of Thailand are Singapore and Hong Kong (China), which are 88.90% and 77.80% respectively. China mainland is a big potential competitor which ranks third (50%) in the table followed closely by Malaysia (44.5%), after that, a few experts regard Australia as a competitor with the percentage of 16.70%.

Those four countries are all located in southeast or southwest Asia which are geographically competing with each other. Singapore and Hong Kong have long been developed as M&C venues and enjoy great reputation for the developed meeting and convention industry. Concerning the regional campaign launched by the tourism authority of Thailand in which they set up a rivalry with major players Singapore and Hong Kong to promote the Kingdom of Thailand as Southeast Asia's premier convention and exhibition hub, Singapore and Hong Kong are obviously the two major biggest competitors which have been proved by the voting of experts.

China, who ranks in the third place, is in the process of developing M&C industry in the country. It becomes increasingly popular among international visitors from the same and different regions. The WTO also forecasts that China will become the world's most popular destination within the next 20 years. The tourism boom will promote the meeting and convention industry in the country. Malaysia and Australia have relatively less votes; they could be strong potential competitors in the future. For second round, only the top three competitors will be examined.

5.2.2 Second Round Delphi

To identify the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry in Thailand, the study developed a competitiveness measurement as shown in table 3 in chapter 3, in this framework, the overall competitiveness indicators are classified into 10 main groups which include 23 sub-indicators.

In the second round Delphi, the result of the first round was reported to the panelists and the panelists were asked to evaluate the diverse items on a 5-points marking scale in the questionnaire, which are very good (5), good (4), average (3), poor (2), very poor (1). The panelists were giving their own professional judgments and opinions by comparing Thailand with its three major competitors which was uncovered by the first round Delphi so as to determine the competitiveness of Thailand.

5.2.2.1 Presenting the Data of the Second Round Delphi

Figure 5.2 the Average Score of Each indicator of the Four Countries

Indicators \ Countries		Thailand	Singapore	Hong Kong	China
1.Facility/ Infrastructure	Convention center	4.12	4.77	4.58	3.84
	Hotels meeting halls	4.12	4.81	4.43	3.07
2 Service	Service quality/ minded	4.62	4.43	4.27	3.49
	Training and Education	3.17	4.19	4.03	2.72
	Professional stuff	3.66	4.38	4.03	2.46
3.Affordability	Finance viability	4.29	4.64	4.35	3.58
	Meeting facilities' capacity	4.27	4.62	4.59	3.31
	Availability of stuff	4.18	4.76	4.32	3.38
	Accommodations	4.66	4.74	4.69	4.11
	Catering	4.34	4.46	4.43	4.02
4.Extra-conference Opportunities	Tourist Attractions	4.88	2.14	2.67	4.75
	Pre-post tour	4.94	3.01	3.36	4.33
	Entertainment/ Activities	4.57	3.26	3.52	4.18
5.Environment	Economical	4.13	4.46	4.38	4.09
	Social-cultural	4.24	4.02	4.28	4.37
	Ecological	3.34	4.12	3.66	2.93
6.Destination management	NTO/ Association Marketing and Promotion	3.93	4.46	4.27	2.94
	Corporation Management	2.94	4.63	4.38	2.21
	Rules and Regulation	3.06	4.31	4.04	3.16
	Pricing	4.67	4.02	4.17	3.76
7.Safety/ Security	Safety status	3.26	4.59	4.43	3.24
	Risk & Crisis management	3.73	4.35	3.89	2.93
8.Technology	I.T Implementation	3.58	4.24	4.07	3.13
	Innovation	3.54	4.32	3.96	2.81
9.Accessibility	location	4.72	4.04	4.37	4.48
	Local Transportation	2.79	4.69	4.43	3.17
	Barriers to Enter	4.66	4.71	4.69	4.02
10.Destination Image		4.29	4.57	4.38	3.98

From the figure above, it can be clearly seen that the overall best destination for meeting and convention industry among four countries is Singapore, followed by Hong Kong, Thailand, and China, however, the perception of different items about the four countries varies.

Facility/Infrastructure, Affordability, Destination management, Safety/Security, Technology, Destination image: According to the experts, Singapore was voted as the best among four countries of Facility/Infrastructure, Affordability, Destination management, Safety/Security, Technology, Destination image, the experts have the highest perception of them. Hong Kong ranks the second whose score is also quite high (all above 4 points), the situation of Thailand is far less competitive compared with Singapore and Hong Kong. For China, who scores the lowest, there is a need for improvement in these areas.

Service: Singapore and Hong Kong offer the best service. They have better training and education and professional staff. However, the service quality of Thailand is the best. People are more service minded.

Extra-conference opportunities: according to the experts, Thailand is the best country to offer Extra-conference opportunities to visitors, its entertainment/activities, pre-post tour and tourist attractions are the unique advantages of Thailand which gains 4.88, 4.94, and 4.57 respectively. China as a big country with rich tourism resources was voted second high just after Thailand. On the contrary, Singapore and Hong Kong lack Extra-conference opportunities.

Environment: The Ecological and Economical environment of Singapore and Hong Kong are regarded as the best; since they are first and second in the list. However, Thailand and China offer fantastic culture and social experiences since their socio-cultural environment is better than the other two counties.

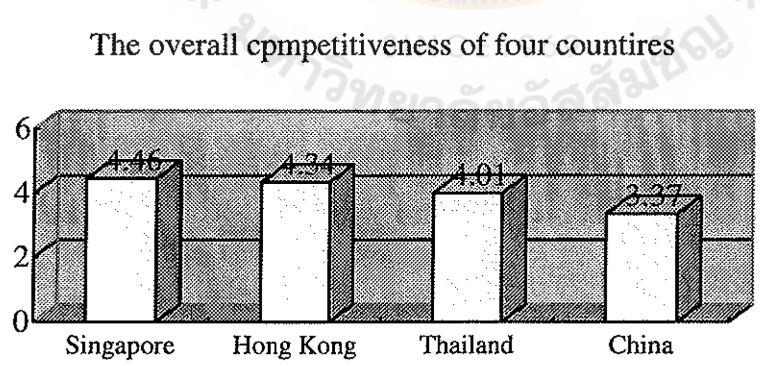
Accessibility: as the figure shows, Singapore and Hong Kong have better local transportation and fewer barriers to enter. On the contrary, the local transportation of Thailand is a big problem which got a very low score. They need to pay special attention to this. However, Thailand has one big advantage of the strategic location which gets a high score (4.72).

5.2.2.2 The Competitiveness of Thailand among its Rivals

After presenting the average score of each indicator of the four countries, the overall score was calculated for each country so as to rank their overall competitiveness. The result is as follows:

Figure 5.3 Overall Rank and Overall Score of Each Countries

Country	Overall Rank	Score
Singapore	1	4.46
Hong Kong (China)	2	4.34
Thailand	3	4.01
China mainland	4	3.37



Among the four countries, namely, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong (China), and China, the meeting and convention industry in Singapore enjoyed the highest score (overall 4.36) and ranked first, Followed by Hong Kong which get 4.23. Thailand ranks the third place with a 0.35 points difference with Singapore. The last one is

China who scored 3.37 and ranks fourth in the table.

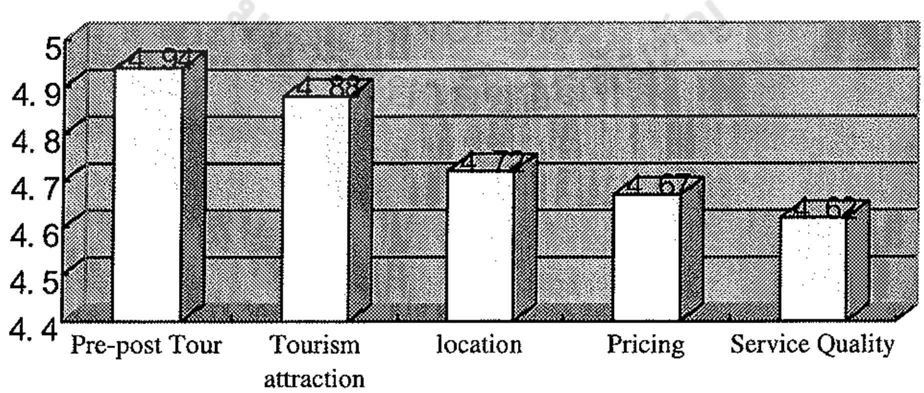
5.2.2.3 The Competitive Advantage of Thailand in Meeting and Convention Industry

From the questionnaires, the highest scores that overpass the other three countries enjoyed by meeting and convention industry in Thailand are the attributes of pre-post tour, tourism attractions, location, pricing, and service quality.

Figure 5.4 The Competitive Advantages of Thailand in Meeting and Convention Industry

Attributes	Score
Pre-post tour	4.94
Tourist Attractions	4.88
Location	4.72
Pricing	4.64
Service Quality	4.62

The Competitive Advantage of Thailand in Meeting and Convention Industry



As the table shows, the most valued advantage that is occupied by Thailand is the pre-post tour activities. It received the highest score at 4.94 out of 5; tourism attraction ranks in the second place with 4.88 points, followed by location, pricing and service quality which scored 4.72, 4.67, and 4.62 respectively.

Pre-post tour

Long been famous as a paradise for tourists, with the size and diversity of Thailand, there is no doubt that the meeting and convention participators can enjoy wonderful pre and post touring. The options for delegate pre and post touring are boundless as are the activities they can participate in during these tours. The fantastic culture, amazing scenery, smiling people, fabulous food- attract people. These are the resources of pre-post tour. The worldwide famous spa industry also originated from Thailand. Outdoor activities are also various and colorful, especially for the adventure delegates. From diving, snorkeling, bicycle riding, hiking to fishing-all of these activities are easily arranged throughout the many differing regions of the country and all are easily accessible, with rich tourism recourses, they can enjoy adventure tour, eco-tour, cultural/heritage tour and so on. There can be no doubt for delegates making the journey to the meeting by taking advantage of what Thailand has to offer before or after the business sessions have taken place.

Attractions

The more diversified a destination's portfolio of tourism products, services and experiences the greater is its ability to attract tourists. The Kingdom of Thailand draws more visitors than any other country in Southeast Asia with its irresistible combination of breathtaking natural beauty, inspiring temples, renowned hospitality, robust cuisine and ruins of fabulous ancient kingdoms. Few countries are so well endowed. From the stupa-studded mountains of Mae Hong Son and the verdant limestone islands of the Andaman Sea, to the pulse-pounding dance clubs of Bangkok and the tranquil villages moored along the Mekong River, Thailand offers something for every type of traveler.

Location

The Kingdom of Thailand lies in the heart of Southeast Asia, making it a natural gateway to Indochina, Myanmar and Southern China. It is quite convenient for the meeting participators all over the world to come to this amazing land. The geographic location offers Thailand great competitive advantages.

In addition, the development of the new Airport-Suvarnabhumi Airport is of strategic importance to Thailand's future and is a priority on the 'national agenda'.

Pricing

The M&C market is comparatively labour intensive, Thailand has an advantage in cost. Neither Hong Kong nor Singapore is as cheap in terms of cost of labor. In an increasingly competitive market, where price sensitivity is often an issue, low costs of tourism products and services as well as a more favorable exchange rate helps attract visitors from other regions. This is certainly an advantage. Thailand is recognized as great value for money. Thailand has significant cost advantages over Singapore, and Hong Kong, mainly because of the comparative low cost of labor here in what is a labor-intensive industry. Manning levels at hosting locations in Thailand can thus afford to be generous as a result - something generally appreciated by attendees. More importantly, it allows for much greater attention to detail. Compared to other competitors, the cost of holding the events in Thailand is cheaper. The cheaper labor and weaker currency lead Thailand to be one of the best events destinations.

Service Quality

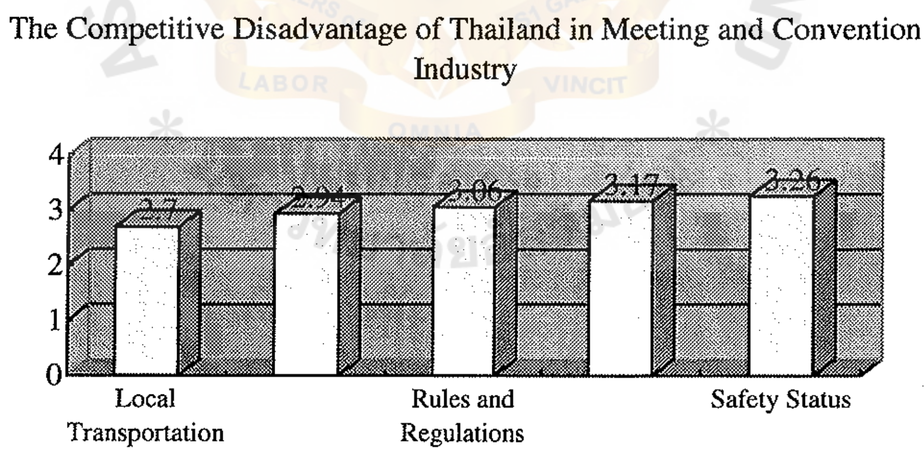
Thailand has long been recognized for world-class service and hospitality. In this smiling land, people are especially friendly, kind, and always service minded. The charm of the Thai character is a big advantage to the industry as meeting and convention is a labor intensive industry. Service quality has an impact on the satisfaction of the visitors, because the staff needs to work face to face with the visitors. Another merit of Thai character is its flexibility with Thai attitudes. In the meeting and convention industry, the working staff has to deal with an ever changing environment every kind of challenge or incident may occur anytime. With flexibility, they can provide better service and gain more advantage.

5.2.2.4 The Competitive Disadvantage of Thailand in Meeting and Convention Industry

Besides the competitive advantages, the disadvantages of meeting and convention industry in Thailand are also worth study so as to improve the whole competitiveness of the country.

Figure 5.5 The Competitive Disadvantage of Thailand in Meeting and Convention Industry

Attributes	Score
Local Transportation	2.79
Corporate management	2.94
Rules and regulation	3.06
Training and Education	3.17
Safety status	3.26



As the table illustrates: the local transportation, safety status, private company involvement, training and education are the main restraints of the development of meeting and convention industry in Thailand, out of the full score 5, they receive 2.79, 2.94, 3.06, and 3.26 respectively.

5.3 Third Round Delphi

Based upon the round 2 research, the competitiveness and the competitive advantage of meeting and convention industry in Thailand were identified and reported to the panelists in the third round Delphi to collect their opinions so as to reach an agreement and seeking their recommendations.

In round 3, the 18 experts have reached a consensus with the result of the competitive analysis and the competitive advantage of meeting and convention industry in Thailand are location, pre-post tour, tourism attractions, service quality, and entertainment and activities. 14 of them provided professional recommendations as to how to improve the meeting and convention industry in Thailand so as to compete with its rivals. The recommendations will be stated in chapter 6.

Chapter 6

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This chapter comprises of three sections. The first section is the summary of findings in this research, the second section presents the conclusion for the research, and the third section discusses the recommendations and the suggestions for possible improvement areas in order to strengthen the competitiveness of Thailand in meeting and convention industry. The recommendations for further research are also presented in this chapter.

6.1 Summary of Findings

This dissertation has the main aim of analyzing the competitiveness of Thailand as a meeting and convention venue among its major rivals. As stated in chapter 1, there were three main objectives of this study, which are:

1) To identify the major competitors of Thailand in the meeting and convention industry.
2) To analyze competitiveness of Thailand as a venue for meeting and convention industry.
3) To identifies Thailand's competitive advantages.

6.1.1 To identify the major competitors of Thailand in meeting and convention industry

The first objective is to identify the major competitors of Thailand in meeting and convention industry. Based on the Delphi method, the major competitors of Thailand were determined as Singapore, Hong Kong (China), and China mainland. The major competitors of Thailand are Singapore and Hong Kong (China), which count 88.90% and 77.80% separately. China mainland is a big potential competitor which ranks the third (50%)

6.1.2: To analyze competitiveness of Thailand as a venue for meeting and convention industry.

Based on the second round Delphi, the rank of competitiveness of the four countries was based on the total score (Overall) of countries competitiveness that is calculated in chapter 5. From the research, it has been found that Singapore, as one of the most favored MICE venue ranked 1st with an overall score 4.46 from the experts. Hong Kong (China) ranks 2nd, the competitiveness of Thailand ranks 3rd among its three competitors with a score of 4.01, the last one is China whose score is under 4 at 3.37.

6.1. 3: To Identify Thailand Competitive Advantages

To achieve competitive advantage for its industry, any venues must ensure its overall 'appeal', and the tourist experience offered, must be superior to that of the alternative destinations open to potential visitors. From the research, Thailand occupied some of the resources with special competitive advantages among its rivals. It is now found that the attributes of pre-post tour, tourism attractions, location, pricing, and service quality are great advantages for meeting and convention industry in Thailand which gained the highest voting and hard for competitors to imitate.

6.2 Conclusion

Challenges remain in Meeting and convention industry as competition increases because of globalization. The competitive advantages that are enjoyed by meeting and convention industry in Thailand should be addressed especially attention should be paid to them in order to win the higher level of competitiveness in a globally competing environment. The aim of this research was to analyze the competitiveness of meeting and convention industry of Thailand among its rivals by the selected experts' opinions. The research method being used in the study was Delphi technique, by using the professional opinions of the selected experts from meeting and convention industry in Thailand to identify the major competitors of Thailand, analyze the competitiveness of Thailand and uncover the competitive advantage of it.

This research reveals that the major competitors of Thailand in meeting and convention industry are Singapore, Hong Kong and China. According to the selected experts' opinion, Singapore has the No. one competitiveness, followed by Hong Kong, Thailand and China. However, compared with them, Thailand enjoys its own special competitive advantages in the attributes of pre-post tour, tourism attractions, location, pricing, and service quality. According to latest literature: the CEI Asia Pacific 2007 Annual Industry Survey, in meeting and convention industry, the market is expanding with Hong Kong leading the way as the most popular M&C destination, followed by Singapore and Thailand in 2006. The results of CEI Asia Pacific Industry Survey differs from the result of from the selected experts' opinions in the thesis, overall, the study results confirm some findings of the latest literature.

The research makes several methodological and conceptual contributions for understanding of competitive analysis of M&C industry. The research findings will help the government and industry to be able to figure out the best ways to improve their performance in advance. Also it could assist their decision-making to formulate successful strategies, which can help them to improve and gain more competitiveness.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Improvement of the Local Transportation

The findings of the study revealed that the local transportation networks are very poor, the condition of the road, public transports like train, bus, motorcycle, boats and are in a comparatively poor condition. The traffic problem is very serious and accessibility to all the convention venues is a key setback to the meeting and convention industry in Thailand. The government should pay more attention to the improvement of the local transportation, for example, improving the condition of the road, increasing BTS and METRO transports, convention center with accommodation complex is recommended so as to enhance the convenience of the visitors.

6.3.2: Improve the Involvement of Private Sectors

There is increasing recognition of the importance of broad community participation, of effective coordination and support between all involved parties as crucial to achievement of sustainable competitive advantage and enhance the competitiveness. One of the major restraints of M&C industry in Thailand is the low involvement of private sectors because they are not able to afford the huge expense for some big events. Only the government or government supported company is capable of holding big conventions. For private sectors, especially those SMEs, are not motivated in getting involved into this business. From the study, it can be concluded that there is a need for the government to extend greater assistance to private sectors.

- Encourage the private sector to coordinate with the public sector and act as a mechanism to generate commercial outcome in product improvement.

- Strengthen partnerships between the public and private sectors. The latter sector; namely, business organizations, scholars, and locals, should be encouraged to participate at all levels and enjoy benefits from it.

- Attract the M&C organizer to Thailand.

6.3.3 Rebuild the Destination Image

Enhancing the appeal of a destination involves a programme of marketing efforts designed to influence the decision process of prospective visitors. These efforts may focus on increasing awareness of the existence of the destination or improving the perceptions of the features of the destination. As the research shows, problems related to safety, security and hygiene still exist in Thailand. The perception of safety status of Thailand is pretty low which will inevitably affect the visitors. Keeping the country affordable, family oriented, safe, culture oriented, cleaning up its moral image, improving environmental standards will brush up the image of Thailand as a meeting and convention venue.

6.3.4 Training and Education

Human resource is critical to the performance of meeting and convention industry. Workers that seek to be competitive must be highly skilled, reliable, educated individuals. They must be able to understand and use the new forms of information technology and the information being made available, adapt to rapidly changing work environment.

Training and education have important roles to play in meeting and convention industry, the finding shows that the training and education is insufficient. Currently there is a lack of professional staff with sound knowledge within the meeting and convention area. Some of the service provided does not match international standards.

Moreover, conference organizers note that there remains a vacuum in one important area: organizers with the expertise and resources to manage major events. Thailand has only a few truly dedicated professional conference organizers (PCOs), with only BITEC and the QSNCC offering in-house PCOs if clients require them. More professionals understanding M&C should be trained and educated.

6.4 Future Study

As expected in all research, limitations to this study were found and should be addressed to encourage more sound research in the future. In this study, the major limitations are: 1) the scope and boundaries of the research. 2) selected indicators and attributes. 3) Lack of the data and information of other three counties.

This study identified and determined the competitive advantage of Thailand in meeting and convention industry. The research method being used in this study was Delphi method; the data were only collected from the experts of Thailand. Other geographical boundaries and research scope should be explored to see if similar findings and results could be addressed.

The 27 items of competitiveness indicators are by no means exhaustive; there was no specific model that could be adapted in this study to identify the competitive advantage of meeting and convention industry. Those indicators and attributes were selected based on the literature review and the researcher's observations. Other critical indicators may exist to achieve future insights into competitive advantage analysis. Several improvements are of course still required to generate a better and more perfect model.

Another critical limitation to this research is related to the data and information of other three counties. The researcher only investigated the main aspects of Thailand, for its three competitors, the data is very limited. Although there is much data available and used in this study, there are still several important data that are not considered. The reason is poor data availability and difficulty in finding the data. Therefore, more comprehensive and thorough investigations of present and expected competitors are recommended so as to include them.

Future studies should consider the above mentioned limitations as essential suggestions and take into account these limitations to produce more complete research results.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Questionnaire for First Round Delphi

Competitive Analysis of Meeting and Convention Industry in Thailand

Graduate School of Business
Assumption University of Thailand

This questionnaire is part of the Master's Thesis for Master of Business Administration in Tourism Management, Graduate School of Business, Assumption University. There are several statements about Thailand's competitors, competitive analysis and competitive advantages which were designed to study the competitive analysis of meeting and convention industry in Thailand. There are no right or wrong answers, so please give the answer that most closely expresses your perception. All information from this questionnaire will be used only for educational purposes and will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

<u>Part I: Personal Data</u>

Please answer the questionnaire below by tick mark (✓) one option that best conveys your personal information in the appropriate boxes.

1. Position

☐ General Manager/ Manager ☐ Academicians/ Researcher

2. Working period in meeting and convention industry

☐ 5-8 Years ☐ 9-12 year

☐ 12 Years Above

Part II: Main Questions

Which countries do you think are the major competitors of Thailand in Meeting and convention industry?

Please write down the top five competitors of Thailand:

1,
2,
3,
4,
5,

Thank you very much for you help!

Appendix 2 Questionnaire for Second Round Delphi

Competitive Analysis of Meeting and Convention Industry in Thailand

Question 1: Please compare Thailand with these three countries in Meeting and convention industry
(Very good=5, Good=4, Average=3, Poor=2, Very poor=1)

Example: Comparing the four countries, if you think the destination image of Thailand is good, then mark ***4*** in the blank; of Singapore is very good, then mark ***5,*** the same to others.

Questionnaire: Please kindly fill this form by your own opinion:

Attributes	Countries	Thailand	Singapore	Hong Kong	China
1.Facility/ Infrastructure	Convention center facility				
	Hotels meeting halls				
2. Service	Service quality/ minded				
	Training and Education				
	Professional stuff				
3.Affordability	Finance viability				
	Meeting facilities' capacity				
	Availability of stuff				
	Accommodations				
	Catering				
4.Extra-conference	Tourist Attractions				
	Pre-post tour				

Opportunities	Entertainment/Activities				
5.Environment	Economical				
	Social-cultural				
	Ecological				
6.Destination Management	NTO/Association Marketing and Promotion				
	Corporation Management				
	Rules and Regulation				
	Pricing				
7.Safety/ Security	Safety status				
8.Technology	Implementation of I.T				
	Innovation				
9.Accessibility	location				
	Local Transportation				
	Barriers (VISA, customs, ect)				
10.Destination Image					

Question 2: Any good recommendation or suggestion on how to improve the meeting and convention industry in Thailand?

Question 3: If you have any other suggestions, please write here:

Thank you very much for your help!