



MICE Tourism in CHT: A Potential for Inclusive Development

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Abstract

The article discusses the distinct and unique kind of group tourism known as 'MICE' in the Chattagram Hill Tracts (CHT) as an exceptional way to combine business and pleasure. MICE tourism provides unparalleled prospects for business development, whether through informal interactions with existing partners and encounters with prospective investors, consumers, and suppliers or through knowledge exchange and exposure to new technology. Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) is a large and quickly increasing industry that is mostly related to business travel. The tourism potential at CHT is enormous. The available venues of CHT might become a choice for new destinations of MICE tourism. The purpose of this study is to explore MICE tourism and its future and prospects in the CHT.

Keywords Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Expositions, Industry.

Introduction

In the context of travel, the term "MICE" refers to Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. It is a subset of group tourism that is concerned with the planning, scheduling, and facilitation of meetings, seminars, and other events. To minimize misunderstanding caused by the abbreviation, the industry has recently adopted the term 'meetings industry.' Others propose for the umbrella term "events industry" to encompass the vast scope of the meeting and event industry.

MICE travel, which is occasionally referred to as the meetings or events industry, consists of a number of distinct components. Among them are corporate meeting planners; meeting and convention departments of hotels, conference centers, and cruise ships; food and beverage managers; logistics firms; private tour operators and transfer companies; incentive houses; professional trade organizations; tourism boards, tourism trade associations, and travel-selling professionals. Locations for MICE events are frequently bid on by specialized convention bureaus founded to bid on MICE events in certain countries and locales. This marketing and bidding process is often launched far in advance of the event, frequently years in advance, because securing large events benefits the host city or country's local economy. Cities interested in hosting MICE events may be offered financial incentives by convention bureaus. MICE tourism is defined by thorough planning and a well-informed clientele.

As a subsector of the travel and tourism industry, the development of MICE tourism is dependent on the shift from conventional tourism to special interest tourism. In this decade, tourism players around the globe have begun to view MICE activities as a large enough opportunity to produce an extraordinary multiplier effect, in addition to nature-based tourism activities. It contributes to economic diversification, encourages the rational use of cultural and natural recreational resources, and facilitates the tourism industry's balanced growth as a whole. (Manzoor *et al.*, 2019). MICE is the most profitable sector of the hospitality industry (Jones and Li 2015), with high levels of

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fragmentation and competition between established and new markets (Locke, 2010); it has direct and indirect positive effects on the local destinations (Bernini, 2009; Lawrence and McCabe 2001). Europe continues to lead the world in market share, accounting for sixty percent of the total MICE market share, followed by Asia with eighteen percent and Australia with four percent. In Asia, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, and China are the MICE hubs, with a number of Asian nations that did not previously work in the MICE industry beginning to see its potential (Yuqiang et al., 2010).

The Asia-Pacific region has become the region with the most rapid growth in meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. The Asia-Pacific MICE industry generated \$229.0 billion in revenue in 2017 and is projected to reach \$441.1 billion by 2025, a CAGR of 8.6% (Allied Market Research, 2022). China continued to dominate the regional MICE industry, accounting for more than 55 percent of the market share in Asia in terms of square meters sold for exhibitions and hosting 70 percent of the venue capacity in Asia with 4,85 million square meters. As a result of the government's encouragement of SMEs and Chinese trade associations to expand their overseas operations and commercial activities, Colliers anticipates that the country will continue to hold the number one position through 2025. Meanwhile, Southeast Asia accounted for 10 percent of Asia's market share in terms of exhibition square meters sold. In 2018, the MICE market accounted for 22 percent of Singapore's tourist receipts, or \$1.58 billion (Allied Market Research, 2022). The expansion of the Asia-Pacific meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) industry is fueled by the massive increase in business activities such as client meetings, brand promotions, employee training activities, and others, as a result of the rapid expansion of the tourism and hospitality sectors and the expansion of corporate industries. A rise in business travel coupled with a shift in business travelers' lifestyles toward leisure travel, rapid urbanization, and a rise in disposable incomes are additional factors that contribute significantly to the market's expansion. In addition, an increase in government initiatives to promote SMBs and the liberalization of market entry to attract more FDIs are anticipated to contribute to the industry's expansion. However, the high costs associated with MICE events and the unpredictability of geopolitical conditions hinder the market's expansion.

In recent years, tourism has become a significant contributor to Bangladesh's national economy (WTTC, 2017). Tourism, a rapidly expanding industry, is anticipated to contribute to the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) in developing countries and their sustainable future, as it can generate jobs, income, and hard currency (Sirakaya, Jamal & Choi, 2001). The total contribution of Travel and Tourism to Bangladesh's national GDP was BDT 809.6bn (4.7 percent of the total GDP) in 2017 and is projected to increase by 6.4% per year to BDT 1,596.0bn (5% of the total GDP) in 2026(WTTC, 2015). According to the Bangladesh Tourism Board, approximately 3,23,295 tourists visited Bangladesh in 2019, which is 21 times higher than in 2018 (Patwary, 2020). The market size of the travel and tourism industry was 590 million USD in 2017, up from 59 million USD in 2007 (Rahman and Chakma, 2018). In addition, the data collected by the Bangladesh Chapter of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) in 2020 confirmed that 4 million people in Bangladesh are directly or indirectly involved in the travel and tourism industry.

CHT is distinguished from the rest of Bangladesh by its unique scenery and ethnic populations' diverse cultures. The region is endowed with natural enchantment and eye-soothing beauty and is bursting with enormous promise in nearly every direction. CHT encompasses 13,295 square kilometers, or more than one-tenth of Bangladesh's total land area, yet is home to less than 1% of



the country's population. It is bounded by India and Myanmar by around 700 kilometers. Hills varying in elevation from 1000 to 3000 feet characterize the area. There are roughly 2,240 square kilometers of reserved forestland. Kaptai Lake, the world's most famous artificial lake, is in the heart of CHT and covers an area of between 736 to 1036 square kilometers depending on the season. Thirteen diverse tribes and Bengalis comprise CHT's demographic canvas.

The tourism potential of CHT has not been seriously explored so far, due to the absence of a systematic plan and initiatives. As a result, this tourism potential area of Bangladesh remained underdeveloped, and people's living standards remained below optimal levels, as traditional subsistence patterns persisted. MICE tourism's multifaceted approach has the potential to generate large employment opportunities for people while also contributing significantly to the country's economy. As Bangladesh's economy continues to flourish, its residents are more economically secure than in earlier eras; domestic tourism has been increased significantly. As a result of economic progress, people's desire to discover the countryside has been greatly expanded. Apart from other forms of tourism, MICE have the potential to transform the CHT landscape due to its multi-faceted events for a huge group of people, which benefit the locals significantly.

Literature Review

MICE is an acronym for Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences, Congresses, and Exhibitions. This means of transport is inextricably linked with business travel. Business tourism comprises all aspects of a traveler's experience while away from their permanent residence for at least one night (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001). MICE, as a mode of business travel, can take on the characteristics of any other mode. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), individuals traveling on business or for professional reasons are also considered tourists (Stetis, 2011).

Tourism is defined as the movement of people to destinations other than their usual places of work and residence, the activities they participate in while there, and the infrastructure erected to meet their needs. To encourage tourism development, a location must offer something special that will entice visitors (Methieson and Wall, 1982). The International Congress & Convention Association's (ICCA) definition is more thorough. Corporate tourism is a set of activities designed to accommodate the millions of delegates that attend meetings, congresses, exhibits, corporate events, and incentive travel. With this in mind, one comprehensive and complete definition of business tourism is one in which business travelers travel for business purposes and attend meetings, congresses, conventions, conference exhibitions, and incentive travel, and in which business travelers make use of a diverse range of tourist services and essential tourism products within tourist destinations (Stetis, Cvijanovic & Simitevis, 2014).

A corporate event is a type of luxury entertainment provided by businesses to their most significant clients in order to preserve a positive image in society or the business world (Stetis, 2011). The Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE) defines incentive travel as a global management tool that uses an extraordinary travel experience to motivate and reward participants for exceeding company goals (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001). A conference is a participatory event designed to foster debate, information gathering, issue solutions, and consultation. A conference can be convened without regard for tradition, continuity, or regularity. While meetings are not always time-limited, they are frequently brief and focused on a particular objective. Conferences, on



average, are smaller than congresses (Pivac et al., 2016). Fairs are one-of-a-kind promotional events that connect supply and demand in the optimal location and at the optimal moment to allow exchange or a purchase transaction (Cvijanovic, 2016). Trade exhibitions are designed to improve sales, promote new products, maintain or build new connections among professionals, and encourage the exchange of ideas and information between exhibitors, experts, and visitors (Pivac et al., 2016). While investigating the abbreviation of MICE, it was found *M* stands for meetings. Meetings are formal gatherings of employees and professionals with the purpose of conducting business or holding formal conversations, which are frequently paired with informal activities. Board meetings; annual general meetings or AGMs; management meetings; training or onboarding sessions; and meetings with associates, partners, suppliers, and dealers are all examples of meetings. Additionally, product launches and team-building exercises may be included (Dwey and Forsyth, 1997). *I* stands for incentives. Incentives are a distinct segment of MICE and a form of gathering with a purpose other than business. Incentive events are enjoyable and leisurely excursions and trips organized for employees, staff, or associates, and occasionally for customers, to thank them for their contributions or support. Typically, it comprises group travel with hotel accommodations, local transportation, dinners, and fun & recreational activities. *C* stands for Conference. Conferences, or conventions, are like meetings, but with a larger and more diverse audience. Typically, this participation is not confined to a single corporation or group. This type of meeting is frequently arranged by professional or industry organizations and associations and might last several days. These types of meetings frequently involve minor exhibitions as well (Dwey and Forsyth, 1997). *E* stands for Exhibitions. Exhibitions are primarily a meeting of buyers and sellers on a broad scale. Here, vendors showcase their products, services, new launches, and related events. Buyers are visitors who come to purchase or learn about new products, services, or debuts, as well as to discover new markets (Dwey and Forsyth, 1997).

MICE tourism has enormous development potential in the CHT, owing to the region's abundant biodiversity and scenic beauty. CHT's natural beauty and enhanced tourism products, service delivery, and hospitality may attract MICE. Apart from the prospect of community-based ecotourism through the involvement of ethnic people, all three districts of CHT have available infrastructure (Tripura, P 2012).

Methodology

This study was exploratory in nature. Primary and secondary sources of data were consulted. Primary source data were gathered through answers from tribal ethnic community members, government, commercial sector employees, and public leaders in CHT, among others. The study examines published books, numerous published research works, newspapers, magazines, government publications, and websites. To understand more about this part, we have conducted the Delphi method.

On the basis of the suggested research question beginning with 'what,' we intend to gain an in-depth understanding of the significance of MICE tourism within the context of Bangladesh. To answer the first research question, we conducted semi-structured interviews. For the initial selection of respondents, we used a judgmental sampling method; we targeted industrialists and tour operators in the Dhaka and Chittagong regions. We initially confirmed individuals' interest in MICE tourism via the screening question. Consequently, only five participants were chosen for a



longer interview during the initial sampling phase. Then, we utilized the snowball technique. We asked them to suggest additional potential units for the study, resulting in a final pool of 25 suitable respondents. With the assistance of a transcription company, we translated the Bengali interviews into English. All participants attended the interview voluntarily and granted us permission to conduct interviews. The interviews, which lasted between 25 and 45 minutes and spanned four months, were recorded and transcribed into text format. Previous research recommended the snowball technique because it results in referrals to similar customer groups (Malhotra, 2015). The researchers conducted a semi-structured interview to broaden and moderate the discussion during the interview session (EasterbySmith et al., 2008). The interview consisted of six broad Bengali questions that were then translated into English. In addition, we requested that the participants answer the questions in as much detail as possible. To conduct effective interviews on the topic of the MICE tourism experience, we used cycles of repetition to collect participant responses. Table 1 highlights the sample demographic profile, which describes wealthy males and females who perceive themselves to be relatively unrestricted in MICE tourism.

Table I. Socio-demographic background of the participants of semi-structured interview

Code name	Mean age	Number of respondents	Gender	Summary of socio-demographic indicators
P2, P3, P5, P9, P10, P13, P11.....	31.3 years	150	Male	Managers of local tourist firms.
P1, P18, P14, P16, P25.....	32.4years	70	Female	Business owners, married, owners of one or two houses having recourses. Having office space and working environment
P15, P22, P7, P8, P17, P6, P23, P24, P21.....	24.7years	132	First 5: Female; Last 4: Male	Entrepreneurs of different small business recently moved to tourism industry
P4, P12, P19, P20.....	36.8 years	33	Male	Managers, customer service managers and employees of private enterprises are interested in bringing guest for meeting and recreational purpose.

Note: Personal information (salary levels and individual assets and wealth) was treated in strict privacy and was not reported in this study.

Analysis and Findings

Upon analyzing the semi-structured questionnaire administered to three distinct groups, the study uncovered numerous insights. The study asked the local community four questions. All questions were derived from previously valid questions. When asked the question local people that - 1. Do you encourage the tourism potential of CHT districts? A total of 385 persons replied to this question. Out of 385, there were 250 persons from ethnic communities (Chakma-120, Marma-75, Tripura-55), and 135 persons were Bengalis. 80% of people support the tourism potential of CHT, 15% believe it will compromise their cultural practices, and 5% percent declined to respond. Then we have asked them, 2. Do you think that the present infrastructure is capable enough to



accommodate MICE tourism? (The interviewee has been explained about MICE tourism). Among the respondents- 70% of people think that the present infrastructure of CHT needs some modification, and 28% believe that the current infrastructure is good enough to accommodate MICE tourism. The rest, 2%, didn't like to answer this question. Later it was asked them- 3. *Do you think that the current security situation is MICE tourism-friendly?* Of the respondents 55% of people think that although there are security challenges in CHT, the practical approach and proactive preparedness of the law enforcement agencies can address this challenge, and 25% believe that the activities of law enforcement agencies are not good enough, the local ethnic leaders need to support the whole process. The rest, 20%, didn't like to answer this question; they appeared anxious, frightened, and confused. Lastly, it has been asked- 4. *Do you think MICE tourism will economically/financially benefit the local people and CHT as a whole?* We have received responses from 90% of people who think that MICE tourism will be beneficial for the local people; it will also create infrastructural development of CHT and 10% believe that there will not be much of changes in the local people rather the rich will become richer.

We have interviewed 15 tour operators about the opportunities and prospects of MICE tourism in CHT. We have asked 4 questions to the tour operators. The interviewee were asked - 1. *Do you think that the present infrastructure of CHT is capable enough to accommodate MICE tourism?* A total of 15 tour operators replied to this question. Out of 15, there were 05 from the CHT locals and the rest 10 were from Dhaka. 80% of the tour operators think that the present infrastructure of CHT needs some modification, and 20% believe that the current infrastructure is good enough to accommodate MICE tourism. Then, they were asked- 2. *Do you think that the current security situation of CHT might become a barrier to a booming MICE tourism?* Based on this question 60% of the tour operators expressed concern about the security situation. Still, they think that the proactive approach of the law enforcement agencies will be able to create a tourist-friendly environment. 40% believe that the current security situation of CHT is good enough to accommodate MICE tourism. Later they were asked- 3. *Do you think that the local ethnic community will cooperate with the tour operators?* To this answer, 70% of the tour operators think that they will get the cooperation of the local ethnic communities because they are getting financial benefit out of it. 30% believe that although there are financial benefits for the locals, they will not get the full benefit of it; the miscreants will grab a lion share of it. Lastly, it was asked - 4. *Do you think that the concerned stakeholders of CHT and Government agencies are exploring and supporting the tourism potential?* We have found that 55% of the tour operators think that government agencies are not prompt while supporting the tour operators. 45% believe that all stakeholders are supportive and cooperative.

In the next phase, we interviewed different local organizations and stakeholders. We have asked- 1. *Do you think that the CHT districts have the potential to accommodate MICE tourism?* A total of 65 persons from different stakeholders and agency chiefs replied to this question. Out of 65, there were 03 District Commissioners, 03 Chairmen of Hill District Councils, 01 circle chief, 15 NGO directors, 05 UNOs, 15 Headmen, 15 Karbaris, and 08 UPZILA Chairmen from different areas of CHT. From these respondents, 80% of the stakeholders think that the present infrastructure of CHT is capable enough to accommodate MICE tourism. 20% believe that some infrastructural modifications are needed to support MICE tourism in CHT. Later, it was asked that- 2. *Do you think that the current security situation of CHT districts might become a barrier to successful*



MICE tourism? Among the response- 85% of the stakeholders think that the current security situation is good enough to support MICE tourism because the law enforcement agencies are proactive and prompt in their action. 15% believe that the security situation is inappropriate to support MICE tourism in CHT. Next, it was asked- 3. *Do you think that the requirements of obtaining permission for foreigners while taking in the CHT districts are great barriers to supporting MICE tourism? We have found-* that 70% of the stakeholders have acknowledged the issue but they opine that these are being done to ensure the safety of the foreigners. 30% believe that this practice might be discontinued according to the present security situation. Lastly, we have asked that- 4. *Do you think that the current development projects being conducted in the CHT districts are going to be more MICE tourism-friendly? We have found-* 95% of the stakeholders appreciated the current development projects being conducted in CHT. 05% believe that more development projects could be in the plan, including an airport.

CHT has enormous potential for MICE tourism due to its abundance of natural beauty and habitats. The region's terrain contrasts with towering hills, enormous lakes, and gorgeous valleys. The CHT's diverse cultures, vast open spaces, and chances for nature-friendly trekking make it a perfect location for MICE tourism. The ethnic communities in the CHT have unique cultures and traditions, and this together with the immense natural beauty of the region can be a major source of attraction for MICE tourism. While there are signs of tourism growth, the region's enormous potential has largely been untapped, not least due to decades-long tensions and restrictions on visitors, and much work remains to be done in terms of infrastructure development, particularly connecting the region's remote and mystic areas to the country's major cities. The CHT is now facing a number of service delivery challenges, including water and energy collection issues, a weak transit system, and a housing crisis. MICE tourism can grow and contribute to the local economy if these challenges are solved. MICE tourism has the potential to become a substantial contributor to community interest. The community involvement aided in the area's tourism growth while also benefiting the local inhabitants. A similar strategy may be implemented in the CHT region, which provides an unequalled backdrop for corporate meetings. Conferences in this city redefine what it means to combine work and pleasure.

MICE has immense potential. It now accounts for 24% of hotel revenue worldwide. Almost 84 percent of business is still generated by corporations, with the remaining 16 percent generated by associations. Approximately 83 percent of buyers in the Asia Pacific region choose to have meetings and conferences in the region. This demonstrates the region's potential, and as Asia develops, meetings and conferences will play a critical role in the success of all enterprises. In this regard, the neighboring country of India may be mentioned. Between 1.2 and 1.5 million Indians travel just for MICE purposes each year. These may include those traveling abroad or those attending meetings, seminars, and exhibitions within India. These 1.2 to 1.5 million persons generate over 1 to 1.3 billion US dollars in costs. Germany is becoming the number one destination in Europe for Indians. The United Kingdom, Italy, France, and Switzerland are also developing economies. In the short-haul segment, the Middle East is highly popular, particularly Dubai, which is the region's most popular destination for Indians. Europe accounts for 50% of the global MICE market. With a 20% market share, it is the second-largest region in the Asia Pacific and the Middle East. After that, the US gives approximately 15%, followed by Latin America at 10%, and the



remainder of the globe contributes whatever is left. Paris and Vienna are the world's most populous cities.

SWOT Analysis of MICE Tourism in CHT

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The natural beauty of CHT includes mountains, flora, fauna, rivers, and lakes. • Relatively little pollution. • Rich culture and heritage of ethnic minority populations. • Infrastructure for organizing meetings, exhibitions, AGMs, and other programs. • Special cuisines of various ethnic minorities. • The abundance of various fresh fruits. • Ecotourism potential. • Availability of hotels and cottages in various unique locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transportation system could be improved. • Inadequate restaurant options. • Expensive resorts and hotels. • Numerous appealing spots within CHT remain unexplored • Security is not up to par • Inadequate mobile phone network, particularly in isolated areas
Opportunity	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business prospects in event management, cultural performances, comfortable transportation, online food ordering, luxury yachts, and other service delivery sectors, among others. • Numerous handicrafts and organic food. • Job creation. • Raising people's level of living. • As MICE tourism develops gradually, criminals will opt to live a normal life. There is a chance in CHT of abolishing armed rivalry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local communities' fear of losing land. • Fear of kidnapping and other criminal activity. • Local populations' misunderstandings and misconceptions about tourism. They have a limited understanding of MICE tourism. • Conflicts between ethnic minorities and Bengalis over coexisting in hill tract areas;

Discussion

MICE tourism has a multiplier effect on the economy in terms of lodging, transportation, communication, advertising, and remuneration of skilled labor. Typically, MICE tourism participants are rich or their company/organization reimburses the total expenses. Thus, on average, a conference traveler spends more than an inbound leisure tourist staying for the same length of time.

CHT boasts several MICE-friendly settings that can be developed into diversified tourism destinations. Each of CHT's three hill districts has several tourism attractions and an excellent support system in place to ensure the success of conferences and exhibitions. Numerous standard hotels and resorts equipped with the necessary business amenities are being developed in CHT.



Apart from the enormous natural beauty seen in all three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban, hotels and resorts in distant locations such as Sajek, Nilgiri, Thanchi, Alikadam, and Kaptai may prove to be appropriate venues for MICE tourism. Additionally, floating arrangements for board conventions may exist in Kaptai Lake. Additionally, CHT, Bangladesh, will offer reasonable pricing in comparison to other Asia-Pacific hubs.

Among the several ways in which CHT might attract global notice as a tourist paradise, there is also a modest financial possibility as an appropriate place for international conferences and conventions. CHT is certainly a conference destination since it offers cultural and heritage sites, exotic and mysterious locales, and superb adventure vacation facilities that may be integrated as pre-and post-conference tours. With a few adjustments, the existing facilities might be converted into business hotels and exotic resorts, complete with unique meeting rooms and suitable convention amenities. CHT is constantly updating its MICE facilities. There are several proposals for more world-class convention halls, as well as initiatives to combine the renowned CHT's ethnic hospitality with customized services for each visitor.

Challenges of MICE Tourism in CHT

Although each of the CHT's three hill districts has enormous potential to develop into a highly anticipated tourist destination, the following issues are essential in the development of MICE tourism:

- *Lack of appropriate tourism policy*
In 1992, the national tourist policy was established, outlining a number of objectives. Its main objectives are: In line with the policy, the Bangladeshi Government provides incentives to attract private sector partners. The UNDP/WTO developed a strategic master plan for tourist development in 1990, which is periodically updated by the WTO. Since its founding in 1972, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has worked tirelessly to build Bangladesh as a tourism-oriented country with hotels, motels, and restaurants. However, this is insufficient for tourism development. The corporation should develop a sustainable tourism policy that prioritizes conservation, respect for the ethnic community's cultures, research of current tourist trends, and market identification. MICE tourism may develop into a significant prospective sector that is projected to expand in the coming years, given the current global situation.
- *Inadequate Budget Allocation for MICE tourism in CHT*
According to a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the economic effect of 2012, investment in the tourism sector in Bangladesh would reach TK36.52 billion in 2012 and will increase by 6.7 percent over the next 10 years to TK69.8 billion in 2022. Although this is a global analysis, there is no accurate information, data, or statistics on tourism in Bangladesh. However, the details of this expected investment, including how, when, and where it would be invested, remain unknown. All policy development, planning, and funding are delegated to pre-established tourist organizations. There is no additional planning or budget allocation for MICE tourist development in CHT.
- *Inadequate transportation infrastructure*



Tourist-friendly transportation is essential for the convenience and unrestricted mobility of tourists. The transportation system in CHT is insufficient. Certain jeep services are used to transport passengers to tourist destinations. The district and Upazila level public bus services do not satisfy international standards. Simultaneously, the streets of CHT remain dark due to a lack of electric lighting equipment. It creates a security risk for travelers.

- *Importance of MICE tourism awareness and the absence of a tourism training institution*
The absence of effective and efficient training institutes is impeding CHT's tourist development. Occasionally, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and other training institutions hold seminars and training programs in Dhaka. District-level training programs are extremely scarce. MICE tourism is not yet on their agenda.
- *Deficient Infrastructural Facilities*
The CHT's most popular tourist destinations are in distant places. The ethnic populations are accustomed to living in isolated regions and cultivating their land on a shifting system. Although the indigenous ethnic communities manage to some extent on their own, insufficient medical services, telecommunications infrastructure, sanitary hygiene services, and a lack of internet connectivity caused concern for domestic and international tourists.
- *Safety and security*
The most important aspect of tourism growth is safety and security. If a tourist feels uncomfortable in a tourist attraction and is afraid of being abducted or losing valuable possessions, no matter how appealing the tourist attraction is, people will avoid visiting. Bangladesh's army, district government, and police are all involved in safeguarding the safety of tourists visiting CHT. However, this is insufficient to protect tourists from criminals. Apart from law enforcement officials, local inhabitants may also be particularly cautious to ensure the safety of tourists.
- *Conservation*
The local community of CHT should exercise caution and vigilance in conserving its natural beauty, as this beauty can help them live a better life by generating jobs. The MICE tourism potential of CHT as a desirable destination is determined by nature. As a result, it is critical to preserve and conserve CHT's natural beauty through the education of tourists, tour companies, and the local population.

A MICE Tourism Model

CHT's ethnic and social practices are comparable to those of Laos' Luang Namtha Province. In Luang Namtha Province, Laos, existing community-based tourism by ethnic minorities has been converted to MICE tourism. To alleviate poverty and promote socio-economic development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Information and Culture collaborated with UNESCO on a community-based tourism project in Laos' Luang Namtha Province. The project provided training to develop abilities in a variety of tourism-related tasks, including homestay, guest house management, tour operations, transportation, and tourist safety monitoring. Additionally, the project designed trekking and cultural programs, as well as a river excursion and forest safari. These programs allowed guests to explore the region's most distinctive natural



beauties and to stay in ethnic minority villages run by local populations. This allowed residents to participate in tourism planning for their community and share in the advantages. Tourist numbers increased because of these efforts.

According to a study of international tourists, the two most important elements luring visitors to the area are ethnic minorities (68% of respondents) and the natural world (66%). Cultural attractions (50%), as well as the novelty effect of a new site (44%), were also significant factors. Residents' socio-economic conditions improved as a result of increasing employment, and they were able to transition away from subsistence agriculture. Between 2001 and 2005, community-based tourism earned a total of USD 137,794 in gross revenue, of which USD 9,485 went to local funds for village development (Suntikul, 2007).

Recommendations

Japan has established a research institute devoted exclusively to MICE tourism promotion. Additionally, it was done to fulfill social responsibility by leveraging expert strengths and experiences to meet the demand for more in-depth surveys and research spanning the multifaceted MICE business, as well as a strong consulting capability, which resulted in the establishment of this MICE industry-focused think tank. Bangladesh's government may establish a research institute dedicated to MICE tourism promotion. Simultaneously, the tourist ministry may take the lead in encouraging local entrepreneurs to expand this sector in a variety of ways, including through exhibitions, fairs, festivals, and competitions. There may be substantial promotional offers available to prospective initiative holders. There is, however, no quick route to modernizing facilities and equipment to keep pace with shifting trends. CHT's existing infrastructures must be updated to host world-class meetings and exhibitions as part of MICE tourism. All suggested MICE tourism destinations must provide the following amenities:

- Auditoriums and stadiums designed to host opening/closing ceremonies and other special events
- Accommodation in reputable five- and four-star hotels
- Restaurants & Lounges
- Convention Centers, Conference Centers, and Banquet Facilities
- Restaurants & Bars.
- Recreational activities include a golf course, a yoga and Ayurveda center, a nightclub, and sports such as tennis, squash, and badminton
- Domestic and international flights are easily accessible
- Exhibition Centers

CHT is ripe for MICE tourism growth. The Government and other stakeholders may explore reforming, modifying, and adjusting CHT in order to achieve a global standard for MICE tourism. The local ethnic community must be incorporated. All tourist places should be serene, untouched, and brimming with excitement, enjoyment, and relaxation. Tourists should receive educational, engaging, and trustworthy information on the region's history, culture, and heritage. It is possible to maintain a practical and participative working network between the public and private sectors. By creating an equipped transportation infrastructure, CHT's tourism destination should be easily accessible. Roads and appropriate helipads for helicopters are required to increase communication



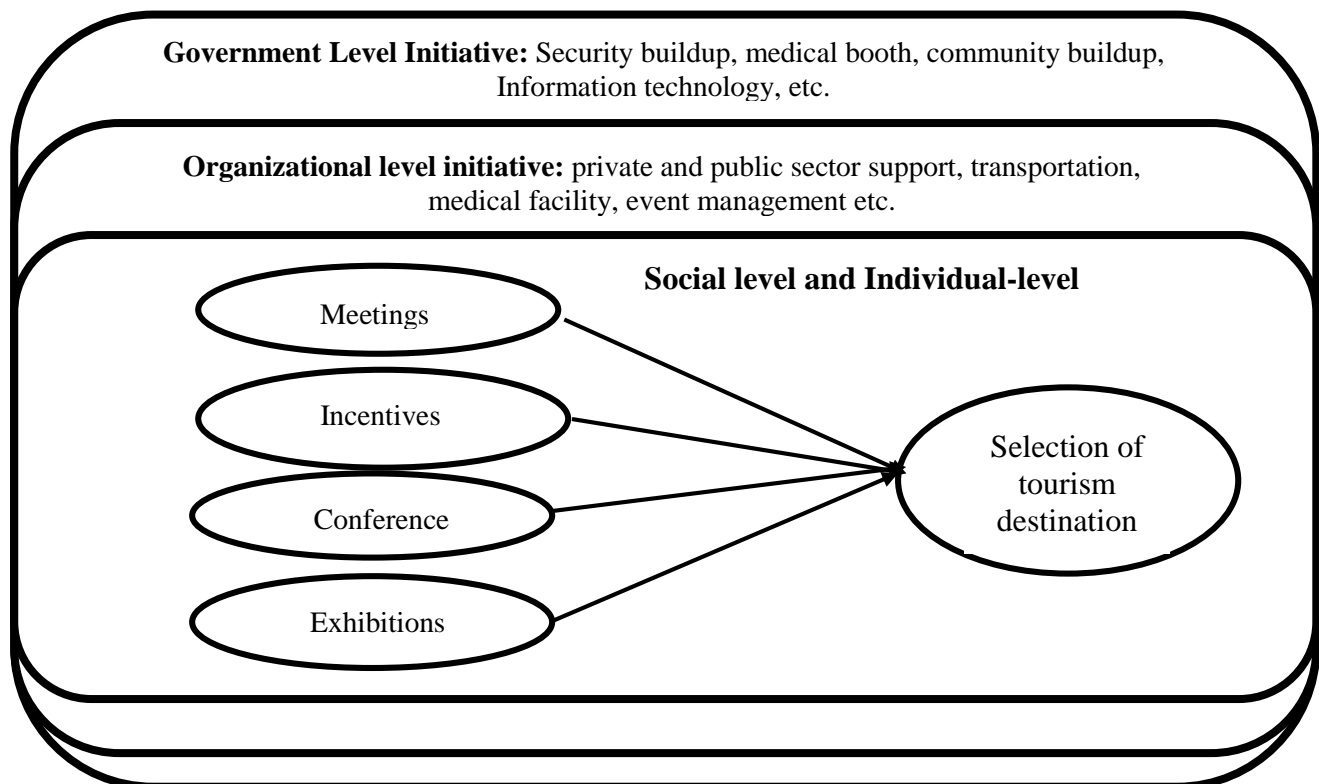
access to CHT. A tourist information center might be constructed throughout the CHT to provide travelers with information about their projected destination, mode of transportation, and housing location, among other essential elements.

The government may decide to create a campaign inviting visitors to CHT to "Explore the natural beauty." Each tourist location should develop ethnic community shopping centers to market goods to local and international visitors. Medical clinics should be established at each tourist destination, as the location is relatively rural. To persuade foreign officials to visit CHT, the CHT tourist bulletin, brochures, and tourism-related magazines are to be distributed to foreign missions.

Bangladesh's National Tourism Policy was established in 1992. Its primary objectives are as follows:

- To pique public interest in tourism,
- To preserve, protect, develop, and maintain tourism resources,
- To contribute to poverty alleviation by creating jobs,
- To promote a positive image of the country abroad,
- To open a recognized sector to private capital investment,
- To organize entertainment and recreation; and
- To bolster national solidarity and integrity

Bangladesh's government gives incentives to recruit private sector partners in accordance with policies. Incentives include tax holidays, loans, reduced tax, and duty rates, and, in some situations, land allocation.





Conclusion

'Newness' is the developing trend in MICE. Destinations must consider how they might provide 'experiences.' Not only can a collaborative effort of the partners ensure safety, but it may also provide a guarantee of knowledge and proof of delivery. Not only is delivery pre- and during-trip, but also post-trip. Providing 'Recognition' is another consideration. All these elements are intangibles in MICE travel, yet they distinguish a fantastic vacation from a good one.

MICE is the catchword for tourism development in the modern day. It is a goal that every destination strives to achieve. Almost every government around the globe has acknowledged the economic and social value of MICE. MICE generates a considerable amount of revenue, far more than conventional tourism. Additionally, MICE has a lower impact on hosts and host destinations than any other type of tourism activity. Almost every country is attempting to position itself as the finest location for business travelers in this regard. Increasingly, governments are attempting to offer exhibitions and events year-round to offset the seasonality of tourism. In this way, MICE is a sector that every government should strive to expand to produce revenue year-round and leave a smaller environmental footprint.

MICE Tourism has enormous development potential in the CHT, owing to the region's great biodiversity and scenic beauty, but tourism marketing must be carefully planned and managed in order to reap the benefits and minimize negative consequences. A comprehensive tourist master plan should be developed that addresses the creation of new destinations and routes, as well as the enhancement of tourism products, service delivery, and hospitality. It is critical to highlight both forward and backward links to growth to ensure that local residents, particularly ethnic communities, benefit adequately from the tourism business. Wherever feasible, women should be engaged. Circuits with easily identifiable and interesting themes such as environment, wildlife, adventure, and culture should be constructed. Links between the CHT and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh's primary tourism hub, should be enhanced to attract foreign tourists to the CHT. Community-based ecotourism should be encouraged by involving residents in tourism development planning and supporting local investment to foster ownership and ensure that tourism benefits accrue locally. The government should continue to improve tourism infrastructure, especially hospitality, and allocate an adequate budget for infrastructure projects like roads, trails, and bridges. Security should be a top issue, as should enabling tourist movement. Above all, only a concerted effort on the part of the government and all other stakeholders can successfully launch MICE tourism in CHT.

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