

**Title:** Assessing the Impact of the Chiang Mai Convention Center on the Management and Operations of Primary Stakeholders in the Chiang Mai Conference Industry

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## **ABSTRACT**

The conference industry has become a driving force in the growth of both the economies and tourism sectors of the world. It acts as a catalyst for increased communication and business development whether in a local or international domain. Thailand's conference industry has been developing rapidly in recent years and has seen the addition of a number of large scale conference centers in the country. One of the most recently completed is the Chiang Mai Convention Center which was built to boost the economy and tourism in the northern province of Chiang Mai. The objectives of this study is to investigate if the Chiang Mai Convention Center has any impact on the operations and management of primary stakeholders, which are hoteliers, event management companies and government sponsored organizations in the conference industry. Furthermore, this paper aims to identify factors from the Chiang Mai conference industry which impact the operations and management of primary stakeholders.

This study utilized exploratory research in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the Chiang Mai conference industry and the different factors primary stakeholders face within the industry. There has been relatively little research conducted on the Chiang Mai conference industry and this paper aims to provide the background from the primary stakeholder's perspective in order to identify areas which could be improved upon in the industry. A total of 12 in-depth interviews were conducted, yet only 9 were completed with sufficient information for the study. In-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders of the Chiang Mai conference industry. According to the majority of the respondents no immediate impact was felt by the emergence of the CCC. This was likely due to the relative newness of the facility and underlying industry factors. The findings suggest there were three main factors within the Chiang Mai conference industry which impacted the management of primary stakeholders. The first was the lack of communication from the organization responsible for the Chiang Mai Convention Center and its ability to engage with the local stakeholders of the industry. Secondly, respondents believed that local government support in the conference industry was a major contributing factor to the success of the industry and overall impact on stakeholders' management and operations. Thirdly, overseas arrivals to Chiang Mai were believed to be of significant impact due to the current lack of international flights from key conference market locations such as Malaysia, Singapore, China and India.

Additionally, there were a number of other factors which respondents felt impacted their management and operations. The findings suggested that in order for the Chiang Mai conference industry to flourish additional promotion and marketing activities needed to be conducted overseas in high potential markets. This would expose Chiang Mai to unknown market possibilities and increase the city's visibility in the global conference industry. Respondents also

believed the lack of primary stakeholder communications in the Chiang Mai conference industry created a closed environment where event information and opportunities would be dealt to a select few and would not give equal opportunities to all stakeholders involved.

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