

MICE Tourism: Meetings, Conferences, Congresses and Exhibitions

Concept Note 3

OBJECTIVE

The acronym MICE refers to the tourism segment focused on Meetings, Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions. This sector is also known as the ‘meetings industry’ and focuses on business tourism and work-related travel for professional purposes. Unlike leisure tourism, MICE tourism is closely linked to business, academic, scientific and institutional activities. This round table will analyse the role of MICE tourism as a driver of economic development, the main types of events, and the challenges faced by destinations in consolidating their position.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

MICE tourism has grown significantly in recent years, driven by business globalisation and the stabilisation of international partnerships. In this context, it has established itself as a strategic component for the urban and regional development of destinations, particularly in regions suitable for hosting international events. The competitiveness of MICE destinations is closely linked to the availability of modern and efficient infrastructure, such as air connectivity, easily accessible transport systems and the institutional capacity to attract and manage events of national and international scope. It is also essential that the destination has professional and specialised facilities for holding the relevant meetings and events. In this way, demand for these activities encourages investment in assets such as convention centres, generating indirect economic impacts on the region. In economic terms, MICE tourism represents a high value-added segment for regional economies,

generating higher average spending per visitor compared to leisure tourism. This is due to the nature of the services required, as well as its lower seasonality.

Types of events

Within the MICE sector, there is a wide range of events. Firstly, meetings consist of internal gatherings such as company assemblies, specialised workshops or executive committees. Secondly, incentive trips are programmes designed to reward and motivate employees or collaborators, combining leisure activities with exclusive experiences. Thirdly, congresses and conferences bring together professionals or academics from the same field with the aim of exchanging knowledge.

Finally, trade fairs serve as business exhibition areas aimed at presenting products, generating business opportunities and promoting the sector.

Role of regional government

The development of MICE tourism does not rely exclusively on the private sector; regional governments also play a strategic role in creating favourable conditions for the consolidation of this type of activity. Firstly, regional administrations can promote investment in critical infrastructure, such as convention centres or regional connectivity, which are key factors in the competitiveness of MICE destinations. Secondly, regional governments have the capacity to act as institutional enablers through policies to attract international events and promote tourism. Likewise, regions can integrate sustainability, technological innovation and digitalisation criteria into their tourism strategies, promoting more environmentally responsible and efficient events. Finally, MICE tourism can be a tool of regional economic development, promoting productive diversification, the creation of skilled jobs and the revitalisation of complementary sectors such as hospitality and business services.

Challenges

Despite its benefits, the development of MICE tourism faces challenges and evolving trends that include digital transformation and the use of new technologies that are redefining how events are organised and managed. This requires continuous investment and adaptation on the part of destinations. In addition, the growing integration of sustainability, environmental and social criteria raises the need to balance priorities.

Likewise, competition between destinations to attract international events is intensifying, forcing regions to differentiate themselves through strategic positioning, innovation and quality.

In conclusion, MICE tourism is consolidating its position as a strategic segment within contemporary tourism dynamics. This is owing to its ability to generate significant economic impacts and reduce seasonality, as well as its contribution to regional development and competitiveness. In this context, regional governments are emerging as key players in the creation of favourable environments, institutional enablers and strategic actors in the positioning of destinations. However, their evolution is conditioned by factors such as technological transformation, growing competition between destinations and sustainability criteria.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- What public policies can regional governments implement to attract high-impact MICE events?
- Can MICE tourism become a tool for international positioning for regions?
- To what extent can MICE tourism be considered an engine of regional economic development compared to traditional leisure tourism?
- What role do sustainability and digitalisation play in regional event strategies?
- What factors explain why some destinations manage to establish themselves as MICE hubs while others do not?