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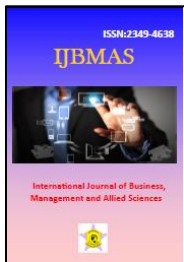
MOTIVATING FACTORS IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHEN CHOOSING A CONFERENCE DESTINATION- A STUDY ON TOURISM ASSOCIATED WITH CONFERENCES AMONG ACADEMICIANS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism Catering around conferences and seminars are always considered as one of the type of Tourism in recent days. Different conference and seminar organizers are seen to choose such a destination which may cater to both knowledge transfers at the same time provide travel and tour leisure. As it is said travelling is learning, academic tourism in the form of conferences and seminars not only contributes to the knowledge society but at the same time enables community, cultural exchanges and opens up new experiences. Nowadays academicians are bombarded with multiple information on conference and seminar schedules because of the blessings of ICT and mobile telephony. However, the choice of participation in seminar solely lies on few factors such as relevance of the seminar, the level of the seminar, organizers details and more. But the Conference 'destination' as one of the motivating factors for participation can never be ignored. In this paper, attempts have been made to understand the concept of Conference Tourism and to find out the motivating factors behind choice of conference destination by an academician. A survey was conducted among few academicians and to understand the important motivating factors Exploratory Factor Analysis was used. The motivating factors identified can guide the conference seminar organizers to choose a particular destination so as to get maximum participation and fruitful knowledge accumulation and dissemination.

Keywords: Conference, Tourism, Academicians, Destination, Motivational factors.

1. Introduction

Academic conferences and seminars have the capability to make the research easier and help the researcher to remain aware about the recent activities in his or her research area. *Conference* is a participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact finding, problem solving and consultation (Trišić

& Bojović, 2018). Any academic conferences seminar gives an individual a platform to put forward his contribution towards mankind in the form of research. Conferences, Seminars always gives a novice researchers or an experienced one the opportunity to meet peers and experts of the same fields at the same time have the ability to clarify and clear doubts if any. In short there are innumerable benefits of visiting conferences. Academicians around the world look forward to attending seminars and conferences within the country and outside the country. The main intention of seminars is to bring common and related researches together and have an in-depth analysis. Again conferences and seminars enables escape from day to day routines and at the same time it gives an opportunity to experience new, perhaps exotic, places (Hoyer & Naess, 2010). Thus tourism in and around conferences is gaining momentum. For meeting, incentives, conferences and exhibitions people flock to different destination in the name of MICE tourism which is an important sector of tourism including tourists who attend the same (Trišić & Bojović, 2018). MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) are an important segment of tourism business which is growing rapidly in the competitive market (Kumar, 2013). There is always a competitive bid to hold international conferences of repute at a preferred destination. The relative share of MICE tourism for different continent and countries across globe can be observed from the table below with relatively good position for Asia and Middle East.

Table 1: Number of meeting per continent

Continent	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Europe	57.9%	59.5%	58.0%	58.8%	58.4%	58.1%	58.1%	59.5%	60.8%	59.1%
Asia & Middle East	16.6%	16.2%	16.0%	15.3%	15.8%	14.8%	16.7%	16.5%	15.0%	18.1%
North America	14.6%	13.5%	13.2%	13.1%	13.5%	13.6%	12.5%	13.2%	12.4%	10.7%
Latin America	5.3%	4.5%	5.6%	5.8%	5.7%	6.0%	6.0%	4.7%	5.7%	5.9%
Australia	3.0%	4.0%	4.6%	3.8%	3.9%	5.0%	4.2%	3.4%	3.6%	3.8%
Africa	2.6%	2.2%	2.5%	3.2%	2.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.7%	2.6%	2.4%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: International Congress & Convention Association Statistics (2005)¹

The meetings held in India also seen a dramatic increase almost double with 17 meetings in 1996 to 37 meetings in 2004 10th securing 10th Position in the chart.

The position of India is consistently increasing with 25th Position in entire world with 150 events hosted in 2012 with New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai being the top destinations². From Table 2 we find a drastically change in the ranks of the countries with India from 10th position in Asia Pacific to 5th position in Asia Pacific in 2017.

¹ <https://www.iccaworld.org>

² MICE Tourism in India, 2009-10, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India accessed from tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/Other/MICE_India_final.pdf

Table 2: Number of MICE meetings per country in Asia Pacific

Rank	Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Rank	Country	2017
1	Australia	187	142	136	132	155	1	Japan	414
2	Japan	146	183	178	142	136	2	China	376
3	China-P.R.	69	63	75	44	120	3	Korea	279
4	Singapore	52	51	58	78	104	4	Australia	258
5	Republic of Korea	38	93	94	67	102	5	India	175
6	Hong Kong, China	47	56	36	38	87	6	Thailand	163
7	Malaysia	32	40	67	59	81	7	Singapore	160
8	Thailand	58	33	70	68	69	8	Chinese Taipei	141
9	Chinese Taipei	33	41	44	31	42	9	Hong Kong	119
10	India	18	35	37	31	37	10	Malaysia	112
11	New Zealand	19	28	16	23	25	11	Indonesia	89
12	Indonesia	18	19	23	19	17	12	Vietnam	64
13	Philippines	35	27	20	24	16	13	Philippines	56
14	United Arab Emirates	6	-	2	7	11	14	New Zealand	55
15	Vietnam	2	8	6	8	7	15	Macau	39
16	Brunei Darussalam	3	4	2	4	6	16	Israel	37
17	Jordan	4	2	2	1	4	17	Iran	20
	Qatar	1	1	1	-	4	18	Sri Lanka	19
	Sri Lanka	5	2	3	2	4	19	Nepal	15
20	Iran	2	1	1	-	3	20	Cambodia	14
	Israel	37	17	11	3	3	21	Myanmar	13
	Kazakhstan	-	1	-	2	3	22	Kazakhstan	11
	Other	23	16	24	32	16	23	Others	61
	Totals	835	863	906	815	1,052		Total	2690

Source: International Congress & Convention Association Statistics (2005) (2017)³

2. Need for Meeting, Conference Tourism

The necessity for conference, meeting tourism is multifold. It is win-win situation for all the parties directly or indirectly involved. Conference Tourism which can be considered a part of the MICE tourism can significantly develop a tourism destination stimulates tourism economy, better infrastructure and increase in tourism expenditure (Affairs, 2018). Conference tourists can develop tourist activities in the destination by staying extra days beyond conferences, sometimes with family and friends so as to have a memorable experience and good impression of the conference (Trišić & Bojović, 2018). Similarly, tourists coming for conference, meetings stay a longer duration than common traveller and also accompany spouses and children to have a mini vacation (Nice, 2004). Events are also seen as a form of leisure and tourism related activities (Getz, 1997). This event tourism helps in economic development and promotion of both destination and the event (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2011). On a macro level the conference tourism contributes a lot to the infrastructural development, transport and communication, accommodation and catering, electric and electronic, social catering, and indirect involvement of other stake holders (Odunga, Belsoy, Nthinga, & Maingi, 2011). Whereas at a participant level conferences and seminars gives the opportunity to escape from day to day routines and at the same time it gives a chance to experience

³ <https://www.iccaworld.org/dcps/doc.cfm?docid=2241>

new, perhaps exotic, places (Hoyer & Naess, 2010). Conference Tourism has an additional benefit of including an element of leisure tourism, in the form of delegates extending their stay after the event for leisure purposes (Ladkin, 2006).

Conference meeting, business meetings are parts of MICE however conference is a way different from business meetings. Business meeting are generally more frequent and small group meetings involving trade unions, service groups etc. rather than Conference associations with multifaceted event involving speakers, seminars and workshops (Hiller, 1995).

3. Review of Literature

The basic difference between Conference and Business meetings stated in (Hiller, 1995) is that attendance in conference is voluntaristic behavior contrast to the business meetings. Since it is voluntaristic it gives an opportunity to the attendees to choose a particular destination based on his or her preference. Hiller (1995) also suggested that since the participation is voluntary, organizers explicitly develop marketing strategy to encourage more participation at the same time package the event from airline booking, hotel accommodation, and transport to post conference tours. Thus it is evident to find out the factors responsible for choice of destination while in voluntary participation.

Budget: Budget is always an important factor be it a leisure trip, holiday trip or a conference trip. According to Singapore tourism board budget is one of the important factor in travel and the sensitivity towards price vary from country to country with Europeans the least budget sensitive travellers compared to highest budget sensitive travellers the Asians (Singapore Tourism Board, 2015). According to Singapore Tourism Board (2015) among few Asian countries Indonesia are the most budget conscious, with Indians ready to spend for enjoyment and least budget conscious are the Chinese. The study of (Verma, 2010) suggests that few MICE travellers may be budget and price sensitive.

Affordable accommodation facility: The MICE travellers include all experiences of staying at least one night away from permanent residence (Trišić & Bojović, 2018). Thus affordable and quality accommodation may be necessary. According to Phophan(2017), internationally, 70 percent of the total sales volume in major hotels and 15-20 percent in the case of smaller hotels are from MICE visitors. The study of Trišić & Bojović (2018), states that the associations arrange accommodation depending on the solvency of the participants. Nwobodo (2016), in his study discusses the importance of accommodation in choosing a destination of convention along with the cost of accommodation. The MICE tourism in India highlights highest expenditure on accommodation by both domestic and foreign MICE travellers⁴. Hiller (1995) stated that to attract attendance convention organizers package the accommodation as a marketing strategy. A study on differences among meeting planners and destination selection criteria highlights number of first class hotel rooms, brand name hotels as an important factor (Di Pietro, Deborah, Rompf, & Godlewska, 2008).

Natural Scenic Beauty: Some studies and literatures do refer to the natural beauty of the destinations as a contributing factor such as (Charmaine & Wadhwa Munshaw, 2003). The study of Chougale & Abdul (2015) depicts how country like India is gearing up for MICE tourism with the help of natural beauty. The study of Premalatha (2017) exemplifies how Kodaikanal a hill station in Tamil Nadu, India is emerging as MICE destination with the help of natural beauty, attractions, flora and fauna.

Quality and Diversity of Restaurants, Night Life and Adventure facility: The study of Di Pietro, Deborah, Rompf, & Godlewska (2008) suggests the importance of variety of nightlife and choice of restaurants. According to the study of Lau (2016), good restaurants are part of MICE tourism be it hotel In-house

⁴ MICE Tourism in India, 2009-10, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India accessed from tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/Other/MICE_India_final.pdf

restaurants or separate restaurants. Again the study of Ni Putu Wiwiek, Djumilah Hadiwidjojo, Wayan, & Rohman (2014) empirically justifies the importance of quality restaurants for making up a destination image. Nwobodo (2016) Rogers (2013) also highlighted restaurants, night clubs as extra conference activities. The availability of adventure facility can also add to the MICE tourism. The article of Charmaine & Wadhwa Munshaw (2003) justifies how adventure facilities helping Malaysia to become a well-known MICE destination. Similarly the destinations like Reykjavík- the capital city of Iceland, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa and Goa in India are promoting adventure for becoming MICE Hubs in India (Travel News Digest, 2012)

Transportation facility: Number of studies suggests the importance of convenient transportation facilities in the conference destination and declares this as one of the most important factor in choice of destination, to cite the studies (Chougle & Abdul, 2015), (Nwobodo, 2016), (Kumar, 2013) (Trišić & Bojović, 2018). Similarly, the study of Nice (2004) declares transportation as one of the stake holders of MICE tourism. Whereas the study of Hiller (1995) states that convention organizers package the transportation like official airline and car rental companies.

Pleasant weather: Several cities and places around the world have been well known for MICE destinations due to pleasant climate and weather and some cities are promoting MICE tourism because of weather conditions. The studies of Jamgade (2018) Chiu & Ananzeh (2012) Premalatha, (2017) Charmaine & Wadhwa Munshaw (2003) mentions Bangalore, Jordan, Kodaikanal, Malaysia as MICE destinations with pleasant climate. Study of (Nwobodo, 2016) (Crouch, 2010) discusses the importance of climate in site selection.

Entertainment Relaxation: Study of (Nwobodo, 2016) mentions recreational as an extra conference activities specifying sports and activities as spectators or participants in MICE events. McCartney (2008) discusses the importance of entertainment events for consideration of Macau as a MICE destination. Similarly Nadkarni & Leong (2007) also suggests entertainment facilities coupled with MICE activities can improve competitiveness of MACAU as a MICE destination.

Mixing with Local Culture: Gunn (1997) in his book on vacation scape mentions about the mixing of MICE attendees with local people in the form of visiting a park, tour of the area, fishing in local water bodies or a session of golf. Hiller (1995) in his study suggest program organizers to incorporate local history , traditions into their activities in creative ways so as to sustain positive feeling among local community and at the same time enable the participants to experience local culture.

Safety: One of the determinants of safety and security in several literatures mentions about safety and security of the conference site. Safety and security has been a determinant in the study of Para & Kachniewska (2014). Hinkin & Tracey (2003) suggested that security is the highly ranked factor for both event planners and participants. Another study of Fletcher & Morakabati (2008) suggests convention tourism industry is vulnerable to negative effects of safety and security concerns since it creates the perception of convention destination

4. Objective of the study

The decision making process for choice of a conference destination may involve several factors, the current objective of the researcher is to identify the common motivating factors that influence an academicians to choose a destination for travel and tourism associated with a conference.

5. Methodology

As obtained from literature several factors can be significant in determining the choice of a destination. Self-administered questionnaire were developed based on 13 factors with 11 factors (Budget, Affordable accommodation, Scenic beauty of host city, quality of restaurants, Convenient Transportation facility, Safety and Security, Night Life, Adventure, Entertainment and Relaxation

facility, Weather and Climatic conditions and Access to local culture) derived from literature and two factors (Nearness to other tourist destination and Host city itself a tourist destination) has been added by the researcher. The statements were measured by 5 point Likert scale.

According to the objective the researcher is concerned with academicians who visit conferences and enjoy the associated tourism in and around the conferences. Thus a total of 100 responses were collected from academicians across the country through Google forms distributing in whatsapp, email-ids making it a random sample. Reliability tests Cronbach's α was conducted to ensure the reliability of the collected data.

6. Analysis

The data collected only from the academicians includes 63.9% Assistant Professor, 8.2 % Associate Professors, 4.9% Professors, 11.5 % Research Scholars and rest 11.5% includes guest faculties, principals etc. Age group wise maximum respondents were from 31-40 years followed by 41-50 years with least from 61 plus years. Gender wise 63.9 % respondents were male and 36.1 % from female category. When asked about how many number of conferences, meetings attended the maximum responses came from the category of 1-5 no of participations followed by 6-10 participations with 24.6 %. Interestingly almost 15 % of the respondent mentioned attended such events more than 20 times. Descriptive Statistics of the data are mentioned in Table 3:

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Items (N=100)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Reliability
1.Choice of Conference destination depends on your budget	2.344	1.2501	0.914
2.Choice of Conference destination depends on affordable accommodation	2.262	1.2234	
3.Choice of Conference destination depends on Natural Scenic Beauty of Host City	2.836	1.3806	
4.Choice of Conference destination depends on Quality and diversity of Restaurants in Host City	3.164	1.2407	
5.Choice of Conference destination depends on Convenient Transport Facility in Host City	2.197	1.1947	
6.Choice of Conference destination depends on safety of tourists in Host City	2.148	1.1523	
7.Choice of Conference destination depends on Night Life present in Host City	3.410	1.2959	
8.Choice of Conference destination depends on availability of adventure tourism in Host city	2.984	1.2714	
9.Choice of Conference destination depends on Closeness/Nearness to Other Tourist Destination	2.754	1.2063	
10.Choice of Conference destination depends on entertainment & relaxation facilities in Host City	2.836	1.3061	
11.Choice of Conference destination depends on Pleasant Weather/Climate in Host City	2.475	1.2330	
12.Choice of Conference destination depends on Access to Local Culture & Hospitality	2.672	1.2072	
13.Choice of Conference destination depends on whether the Host City itself is a Tourist Destination	2.803	1.2493	

Factor Analysis: Exploratory Factor analysis (PCA) was conducted using SPSS version 21. The initial pre requisites for conducting factor analysis were maintained and a rotated factor analysis was calculated using varimax rotation. The 13 items considered in the study was seen to have two dimensions or two factors which explained 66.14 % of the total variance during the first iteration. The first iteration went well with fulfillment of all criteria except the presence of complex structure in rotated component matrix. Thus those variables creating complex structure were removed from the analysis and the factor analysis was run again. After 2nd iteration one variable had communalities less than 0.5 which had been removed and the factor analysis was run again. The third iteration of the factor solution provided two dimensions or factors which explained 70.67 % of the variance which is adequate. After the 3rd iteration none of the variables had communalities less than 0.5 and no complex structure were available. The factor solution can be seen from the table 4 mentioned below:

Table 4: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.461	49.562	49.562	4.461	49.562	49.562	3.615	40.165	40.165
2	1.899	21.104	70.667	1.899	21.104	70.667	2.745	30.502	70.667
3	.646	7.179	77.845						
4	.601	6.674	84.519						
5	.369	4.101	88.620						
6	.327	3.628	92.248						
7	.269	2.988	95.236						
8	.242	2.686	97.922						
9	.187	2.078	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis (PCA).

Source: Author's Computation

The rotated component matrix mentioned in table 5 indicates the factor loadings of each variable. It can be observed that there are two components with the 1st component having 5 variables and 2nd component having 4 variables. In total 9 variables out of 13 variables were retained in the factor analysis after 3 iterations.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
choice of Conference destination depends on your budget		.778
choice of Conference destination depends on affordable accommodation		.887
choice of Conference destination depends on quality and diversity of restaurants	.847	
choice of Conference destination depends on convenient transport facility		.730
choice of Conference destination depends on Night Life Present	.810	

choice of Conference destination depends on availability of adventure	.824	
choice of Conference destination depends on Nearness to other tourist destn	.768	
choice of Conference destination depends on entertainment/relaxation facilities	.820	
choice of Conference destination depends on pleasant weather		.755

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Author's Computation

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

7. Conclusion, limitations and Future Scope

Thus we find that out of 13 variables only 9 variables have been retained into two components or factors. The variables retained are budget, affordable accommodation, quality of restaurants, transport facilities, night life, adventure availability, closeness to other tourist destination, relaxation facilities, and pleasant weather which may be considered as the motivating factors behind the choice of destination for participating in a conference. The factors like natural beauty of the destination, safety and security, access to local culture and host city itself a tourist city were removed from the analysis considering less factor loadings. Interestingly out of two experimental factors chosen by researcher, one factor i.e. nearness or closeness to other tourist destination seemed to be having good factor loadings.

The study is not limitations free. The study cannot be generalized as the results may differ in other geographical, cultural or academic set up. Due to time and cost hurdle the researcher was unable to take a larger sample size. A larger sample size can create difference in results. As academicians are human beings who can sometimes makes emotional rather than logical responses, hence an amount of biasness may prevail.

The factors that were having poor factor loadings need to be tested again in future to understand the reason of such loadings. Future scope lies in comparative study among single academician trip or trip as a couple, family or friends. Further gender wise and academic position wise comparison may be undertaken in future.

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