

The major key factor to be a well-developed conference destination: A case study of Jordan and Chengdu- China

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ABSTRACT

Having a successful conference business or becoming a well-developed conference destination is a critical topic that has rarely been examined. In fact, due to its direct or indirect impact on the host destination, it has been long recognized as one of the most lucrative sectors of the hospitality industry in terms of economic benefits as well as the fame and the good reputation of those countries. Reviewing literature shows that researchers have mainly focused on different attributes of conference businesses as being independent of each other. However, this study claimed that becoming a well-developed conference destination requires to work on different attributes of conference businesses as being dependent on each other. To achieve this, the study has employed the quantitative approach, where it attempted to evaluate conference business from the conference attendees' perspective. This was done by examining comparatively two conference destinations in a case study that involved Jordan as a developed destination and Chengdu-China as a well-developed destination. Data was collected by a questionnaire and analysed by using weighted average and ANOVA test to evaluate and compare conference quality in both destinations. The results revealed that even though Jordan seems to be on the right track to follow leading destinations in conference industry, Jordan was perceived as less competitive compared to Chengdu. We argue that the major cause for Jordan to be less competitive could be due to the lack of coordinating, dependently, the efforts between the different attributes or elements of the conferencing processes in Jordan. This finding can help organizers to pay more attention as it could be the missing link that may explain why some conference destinations are advancing over others, and consequently, gaining the insight about the major key factor that mainly lead to be a well-developed conference destination.

Keywords: conference industry, evaluation, satisfaction, Jordan, Chengdu.

1. Introduction

Conference industry, in the world, is attracting a great attention of many international organizations, especially the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Conference tourism is considered as part of the Meetings, Incentive travels, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism. It has been long recognized as one of the most lucrative sectors of the hospitality industry due to its direct or indirect impact on the host destination. An example of this is the economic benefits as well as the fame and the good reputation that countries gain when important international conferences held on their lands (Bernini, 2009; Getz, 2013; Leong, 2007).

Economic Benefits

According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), most international organizations are located in Western European countries. Paris, London and Brussels are the three largest cities with international organizations. Although Europe still has the largest Percentage of the number of conferences, China comes third among the first three countries in the world to host international conferences, right after the United States of America followed by the United Kingdom. In fact, the exhibition and conference industry in China is experiencing a rapid

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growth and is evidently continuing to expand significantly over the next few years. In 2013, China was the world's largest travel and tourism economy with a global market share of 11 percent, surpassing the United States. The Chinese tourism industry reported a 14 percent increase in revenue to almost three trillion Yuan in 2013 (statista, 2018). in the Middle East market, according to the annual research in 2018, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has some interesting findings, where it revealed that the total contribution to GDP from Travel & Tourism is (8.9 per cent of GDP) or \$224.2 billion, which rise by 4.3 per cent in 2018 (Destination reporter, 2018). Anyway, direct tourism contribution to the GDP of countries in the Middle East and Africa in 2016, by city (in billion U.S. dollars) is shown in Diagram 1 (statista, 2018)

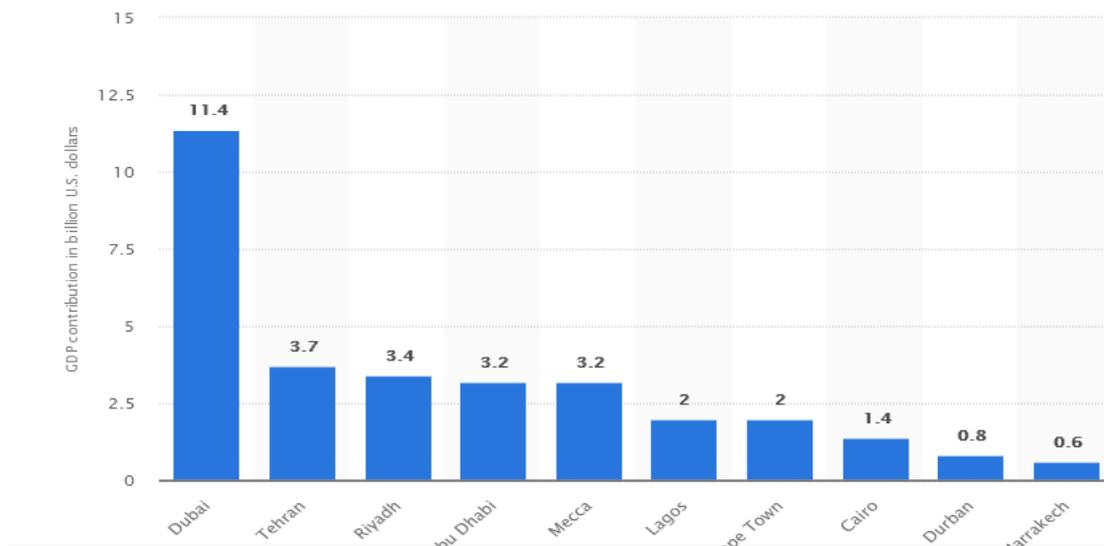


Diagram 1: direct tourism contribution to the GDP of countries in the Middle East and Africa in 2016

With regards to Jordan and Chengdu, as no diagram in literature includes these together, in 2013 Chengdu realized total tourism revenue of RMB 133,066 million, up 26.64%; where the foreign exchange income from tourism industry was up to USD 731 million (Andy, 2019). In Jordan, in 2017, the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was 18.7%. Though Jordan contribution of travel and tourism to GDP fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to decrease through 1998 - 2017 period ending at 18.7 % in 2017 (knoema, 2018). However, from 400,000 conferences and exhibitions in the world each year that generates profits of up to \$ 1.6 trillion, Jordan is estimated to generate approximately US \$ 50 million per year. But yet this economic return seems not to be significant at the global level when considering the potentials and capabilities of Jordan in terms of conferencing. For this, the tourism sector is now coordinating and intensifying its joint efforts to promote conference and business tourism globally to attract more businesses to Jordan which is currently one of the best hosting countries in the Middle East (Jordan times, 2008).

Conference industry is a complicated system that consists of conference hosts, organizers, supplier businesses and other additional organizations that interact with each other (Rogers, 2008). It involves the development, planning and implementation of business activities held for professional, commercial, cultural, academic and medical purposes. Eventually, in the feasibility phase for a conference, organizing committees makes their financial calculations by considering and evaluating the regions possibilities (venues' capacity, accessibility, accommodation and climatic consideration etc.) and none the less, evaluating the desirability and suitability of the events (Getz, 2005). After considering all pros and cons, conference enthusiasts decide whether to proceed or not with a particular event.

Therefore, this industry is a dynamic industry which is interconnected with all economic sectors, with direct and indirect economic effects, Social, cultural and political. In fact, a truly successful conference industry is one that is managed in such a way that the needs of all stakeholders are satisfied to the greatest extent possible (Davidson, & Rogers, 2006).

But why is the conference industry important to be studied? And how can it be reflected on the economy of any country? In fact, the answer to these questions lies on the fact that conference tourists or participants may stay longer than leisure tourists. They are considered as large spenders (Hughes, 1988). They are mostly willing to revisit the conference destination with their families as leisure travelers (Kim, Chon, & Chung, 2003), which widens the potential economic, social, and cultural impact (Getz, 2013). The promotion of the local culture, catering, handicrafts, and the reputation of the host community is a product of conferences (Lau, Milne, & Johnston, 2005) i.e. Conferences may create new jobs and improve the facilities of the host country (Dickson, Misener, & Darcy, 2017). Indeed, the local communities has a bifocal role in the development of conference industry as they could get more jobs or be involved as participants in the management plans (Bakri, Jaafar, & Mohamad, 2014).

The statement of the problem

The problem of this study stems out from the fact that so many destinations are ambitiously looking forward to boosting their conference industry. However, as the level and volume of national and international interests are evidently supported by the number of venues for conferences and special events, a special evaluation of the quality of conferences is needed from time to time, in site or by comparing it to another conference industry in a well-developed destination. However, due to the fact that Chengdu was awarded the title of the most competitive city for developing the exhibition and conference industry in western China based on its strength in related infrastructure, market cultivation, branding events and resources allocation (Chen, 2017), Chengdu was selected to evaluate Jordan as a conference destination. However, evaluating conference industry and its overall quality in Jordan through a comparison will be based upon customer satisfaction. Brady and Hault defined Customer satisfaction as customers' evaluation that depends on emotional or cognitive experience. Indeed, studies, confirm that customers satisfaction might lead to favorable word-of-mouth and to repeat visit and be more willing to participate again and again in such conferences. (Brady and Hault, 2000),

In fact, such evaluation is intended to push for improving conference industry in destinations that are looking to boost their conference business worldwide, especially after the economic openness and global competitiveness on the conferences industry. Boosting conference business worldwide may be achieved by two factors. First, by making this sector more productive and effective in achieving integration within the framework of sustainable development by the qualification of more leaders to achieve more success based on creative vision, professional skills necessary and high standards of excellence and quality and consequently expanding the base of investment opportunities in undeveloped destinations. Second, by transferring knowledge and benefit by competing or evaluating against well-developed destinations like Chengdu which may end up in pushing for creating alliances with organizations specialized in conference industries.

Therefore the significance of this study lies on the fact that these two factors may help any conference destinations who are focusing on ways to improve tourism facilities and revenues. However, this study will show that despite the few resources, any conference destination, whether Jordan or any other destinations, can take more advantage from being enriched with ancient historical sites and a fascinating culture (Alafi,2014).This will be based on the fact introduced by (Yang & Tan, 2017: 862) who stated that "although conference attributes play a vital role in the attending decision, innovative conference concepts have the upper hand".

However, reviewing literature shows that researchers have mainly focused on different attributes of conference businesses as being independent of each other. This study claimed that becoming a well-developed conference destination requires to work on different attributes of conference businesses as being dependent on each other. Therefore, this study will attempt to answer the following two questions that have received little attention in previous research

How far is Jordan from being a well-developed destination as Chengdu?

What is the major key factor to advance to be a well destination country?

2. Background about Chengdu and Jordan

2.1. Jordan

Jordan, officially The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is a sovereign (monarch) Arab state, located in western Asia on the East Bank of the well-known Jordan River. However, the factors that helped drive Jordan, in general, and the Dead Sea, in particular, to be one of the most important areas in the Middle East for conferences are the strategic location of the region, as it is close to European countries, East Asian countries. In addition, the location of Jordan is central to all political and religious conflicts in the Middle East, and its volatile geopolitics (Hazbun, 2008). In fact, this must be highly considered and given the priority, by taking the advantage of Jordan probably being the safest country in the area to hold conferences. Moreover, Jordan is characterized by the abundance of tourist sites accompanied by the luxury tourist resorts that spread everywhere around the territory of the Dead Sea. However, the geographical and climatic diversity gave the country a strategic position as a crossroad between nations in all prehistoric and historic times, with a wide spectrum of natural and tourism offerings (MOTA 2010)

This is in spite of the fact that little work can be done to include less favoured areas that are marginalized and poor (Alananzeh, et al., 2017). However, Jordan is classified as a country of "high human development" with an "upper middle income" economy. The Jordanian economy, one of the smallest economies in the region, is attractive to foreign investors based upon a skilled workforce. Indeed, tourism is very vital to the national economy of Jordan, as it's the second largest private sector in employment, and the second producer of foreign exchange (Harahsheh, 2009). The country is a major tourist destination; especially in attracting medical tourism due to its well-developed health sector. Other types of tourism product include ecotourism, green meetings and MICE tourism which is becoming popular in Jordan; in Amman, Petra, which is famously known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Dead Sea, Aqaba, Wadi Rum, Wadi Mujib, Azraq and Ajlun (Haddad et al., 2014). In fact, for nearly a decade, green meetings is becoming a major topic in the media (Mair & Jago, 2010), but also the coverage on sustainable conference centres has increased significantly in recent years (Hall, 2011). Anyway, Chiu and Ananzeh (2012) showed that Jordan has destination attributes that meet the requirements for competition, and could put Jordan on the international MICE destination map, which may turn Jordan to become one of the developed destinations. Such attributes are ancillary services, amenities, affordability, activities and attractions (Jin & Weber, 2016; Jonsson & Devonish, 2008).

However, in Jordan, conferencing has been emphasized as a new way of marketing. It is a new pattern that has become recently the focus of tourism industry. In fact, what increase the attractiveness to the conference industry in Jordan are the touristic trips to enjoying and charming sites which are enriched by various natural and cultural elements that attract visitors from everywhere. This is precisely what prompted the tourism development agencies in Jordan to take care of conference halls, including the King Hussein Palace for Conferences in the Dead Sea, and to equip them with the latest means that will attract international and local conferences. In this regard, the Tourism Promotion Authority of Jordan is transforming the Dead Sea into a leading global destination for meetings, conferences and exhibitions. Meanwhile, Jordan is working to make the Dead Sea a leading hub for international business and conferences that will attract more visitors to Jordan. In fact, the Dead Sea is an ideal venue to market conferences, which are often held after the traditional tourist season ends. For this, human resources with expertise in Jordan provide excellent and affordable services to conference organizers. In addition, there is a strong and growing domestic market. In Jordan, there are countless cultural landmarks, therapeutic places and recreational sites. In addition, Jordan has a Mediterranean climate that is suitable for events throughout the year. Moreover, the ease of access through air, sea and land transport networks has led to the diversity of attractions in Jordan. Actually, the most important advantages of investing in conference centers in Jordan are: what the Jordanian government most pays attention for in gaining a large share in the market, the advanced tourism infrastructure in Jordan, human resources with high-level education and experience and the great places to suit the market. Nevertheless, these attributes are highly challenged by the slow economy and possibly the political stability environment as perceived by organisations who seek locations for the large professional associations on the one hand and the absence of the innovative conference concepts which have the upper hand as claimed by (Yang & Tan, 2017) on the other hand.

2.2. Chengdu

Chengdu is a sub-provincial city which serves as the capital of China's Sichuan province. Chengdu, known in the past as the land of abundance, is one of the three most populous cities in Western China (the other two are Chongqing and Xi'an). It has a political and economical stable environment and considered the cultural center of Western China. It has good transport facilities and advanced commerce. Since China adopted the "gowest" strategy at the end of last century, Chengdu has witnessed rapid economic development and has become a financial, educational, scientific, technological, commercial, trade, and communications hub. Machinery, electronics, metallurgy, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, foodstuffs and light textiles are the city's main industries. The local tourism authority estimated that the city received 122 million tourists over the last year; More than 1.5 million of them were from overseas. Chengdu was awarded the title of the most competitive city for developing the exhibition and conference industry in western China, based on its strength in related infrastructure, market cultivation, branding events and resources allocation (Chen, 2017). In fact, in 2017, Chengdu made great achievements in tourism, where at the end of 2016, it was selected as one of the 21 "Best of the World" destinations for 2017 by National Geographic, the only Chinese city on the list. Moreover, Chengdu has gained the following titles in recent years as: the Best Tourist City in China; * One of the World's Fastest-Growing Cities by Forbes Magazine; UNESCO's City of Gastronomy; One of the "52 Places to Go in 2015" by The New York Times and the world's second fastest-growing destination for international visitors in 2015 to 2017 MasterCard Global Destinations Cities Index;(Go Chengdu, 2017). Moreover, it was entitled as "the Best Tourism City of China" by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)(Andy, 2019). In fact it is a leading city in domestic tourism and inbound tourism of Sichuan(Yu and Gennian, 2017).

Anyway, the strong competition in international markets has led to the emergence of so-called alliances between companies. This move is positive in supporting the industry of conferences and forums in Jordan, especially in such a modern industry in the region or anywhere else in the world such as Chengdu .In fact The number of licensed business activities, including, forums, symposiums, workshops and institutional meetings, held in Jordan, recently, for example, during 2016, and 2017 is vast enough to be concerned about conferences industry specially in evaluating it and that is what forced the researcher to conduct this study focusing on benefiting from this industry in Chengdu.

Why Jordan and Chengdu (China)?

Jordan and china have been selected for this study for the strong relations that connect the two countries politically and historically and for some of shared attributes as the both countries are well known as touristic places with a variety of natural and historical sightseeing. Moreover, the two countries have good reputation on conducting peace and safe life along the years. Therefore, Chengdu has been taken as a case study from China to be compared with Jordan. This was mainly due to the abovementioned similarities shared between the two destinations, the location (Chengdu is in the middle of China whereas Jordan in the middle of the Middle East countries), the population (Jordan population is estimated by 10,000,000 in 2017 while Chengdu population reached about 12,000,000 in 2017) and more importantly their potentials towards conference businesses.

Jordan has been chosen to represent a developed conference destination that is willing to boost its conference business to compete other well-developed conference destinations to gain the aimed economic revenue and to achieve the other aimed benefits. Chengdu has been selected to represent a well-developed conference destination (as a part of China which ranks among first countries related conference tourism). Chengdu has achieved a big and significant progress recently boosting its conference business to the top which turn the researchers' eyes to investigate more studies on this field.

3. Literature Review

Churchill and Suprenant (1982) measured the effect of expectations and performance on satisfaction. The findings stated that performance effect satisfaction directly. For the complication of measuring attendees' satisfaction, many

researches only use the perceived performance as a test of satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

For the profits earned from conference delegates Var et al (1985) stated that, maximizing the number of delegates is a shared and a common goal for planners, convention agencies and the host locations itself. For the above goal, increasing the attendees' number only achieved with a deep understanding of the international conference delegates motives, behaviors and reactions. Accordingly, the deep understanding of the convention delegates can help organizers and planners to set better strategies to attract more delegates (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). As a result, participants can be satisfied with strategies and plans matching their expectations.

To satisfy the different group of attendees who are looking for learning and education opportunities, Lee and Back (2008), suggest that conference organizers exhibit a diversity of sessions in different styles, from panel discussion to video conferences. Furthermore, to facilitate networking, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) provide "spot me" device to enhance networking possibilities, the Spot-me device is a small device which communicates over radio with other co-located Spot-me devices in the close vicinity of its user. It is intended to function as an "icebreaker technology" at conferences (Lee and Back, 2009).

Swan and Combs (1976) confirmed the satisfaction value as a part to the participants' future decision making as a post purchase attitude of buying goods or receiving services.

Severt et al. (2007) examined the relationships between the participants assessment of conference overall performance, satisfaction level, and behavioral intention relating to the conference. The results of showed that, education and networking opportunities scored highest, relating attendees satisfaction. Severt et al(2007) discussed that, measuring only attendees satisfaction is insufficient sign to guarantee the attendees return, admitting that conference organizers should organize a conference uniquely from similar conferences by using different products, continual networking, pre, during and post the convention; via e-mail that show up the convention activities those participants show satisfactions toward. Various hospitality and tourism scholars have investigated researches for examining customer satisfaction in conference tourism (kim et al, 2012; Sever et al, 2007). In convention tourism, a limited number of studies measured customer satisfaction from comparing perspective to evaluate the quality of existing services and management to propose strategies for improvement.

4. Methodology

4.1. Study Design

This research is conducted to compare a well-developed destination with a developing destination in the conference industry, so that developing destination countries looking to boost their conference business can get the benefits and develop their strategies based on successful stories of those developed destination countries. Therefore, Chengdu, the Sichuan capital in China, has been taken as a good example for those who did a good progress in boosting their conference business which reached the top of the ladder among the other cities and destinations related to conferences and conventions business. On the other hand, Jordan has been taken as an example for those developing destinations with regards to conference business. This is mainly due to the facts that, first Jordan is ambitiously looking to boost its conference business to follow and compete with the other leader conference destinations. Second, Jordan has most of the helpful factors and resources, from venues, qualified human resources, transportation and good infrastructure. The researcher believes that this may help Jordan as well as other developing destination gain enough knowledge and perspectives to promote their strategies and their whole conference industry by taking in their consideration the study conclusion and recommendation.

To achieve the main objective of this study, the researcher used a comparative quantitative approach to evaluate conference industries in both destinations, Chengdu and Jordan. Therefore, a survey was conducted using a questionnaire after an in-depth literature review on the topics related to conference evaluation processes. The questionnaire was developed to collect data from the sample of the study to evaluate conference quality in Jordan and Chengdu.

4.2. The population of the study

The population of this study will be based on all participants of the following conferences, in both Jordan and Chengdu, in the period Feb, 2017-Feb, 2018.

4.3. Chengdu conferences

1. Slush Up: on May 12, 2017 at Chengdu Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone. The event focused primarily on information and communication technology (ICT), artificial intelligence, game, media and creative industries, by way of online entrepreneurship competition, presentations, new product releases and road shows.

2. The 6th Spring World Congress on Engineering and Technology (SCET 2017) which was held from April 18-20, 2017 in Chengdu, China. This Conference covered issues on Engineering and Technology. It dedicates to creating a stage for exchanging the latest research results and sharing the advanced research methods.

3. The 3rd International Conference on Education, Learning and Training (ICELT 2017) was held in Chengdu, China on October 12-14, 2017. It covered topics such as: Adult Education Human Resources... (I don't know if we have to mention the conference titles or if we could only mention the name of the conference with the date)

4.4. Jordan Conferences

1. August, 11th RESEARCH LEAGUES - International Conference on Sustainable Energy Policies and Technologies (ICSEPT-18)|Amman. The aim of the Conference is to provide a platform to the researchers and practitioners from both academia as well as industry to meet the share cutting edge development in the field.

2. September, 15th 2017International Conference on Media and Communications (ICMC-18). TheaimoftheConferenceistoprovideaplatformtotheresearchersandpractitionersfrombothacademiaaswellasindustryto mee tthesharecuttingedge developmentinthefield.

3. RESEARCH LEAGUES - International Conference on Personal Health and Health Monitoring (ICPHHM-18)|Amman, August, 4th. The aim of the Conference is to provide a platform to the researchers and practitioners from both academia as well as industry to meet the share cutting edge development in the field

4. 2nd International Dead Sea Conference of Sport and Health Science – Jordan. Arab-European Conference of Sport Health Science (AECSHS)1-3 Nov, 2017, Dead Sea. It aimed to bring together leading scientists, scholars, researchers, experts and leaders from around the world to share and discuss both theoretical and practical knowledge about sport and health science,, knowledge, expertise, and research results in sports and physical education sciences.

4.5. Sample of the study

Two samples of, 50 from Chengdu and 50 from Jordan, were selected randomly right from the aforementioned conferences in Jordan and Chengdu in the period Feb, 2017-Feb, 2018.

4.6. Tools of the study

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part aimed to collect socio-demographic information about the participants, which are: Gender, Age, Education, Citizenship, Number of conferences attended by participants, Number of sessions chaired by participants and whether they have served as a discussant. The second part aimed at collecting answers for 11 questions relevant to rating conference attributes which include registration and communication processes, technical Support, organization of the conference, the opportunity to network, knowledge(venue) gained, expectations, overall quality of the presentations, events and programs, evaluation of the conference industry, climate issues, the fast growing developed economy and finally, the stability of the political environment, as seen in appendix 1. In fact, these attributes was suggested as being mentioned and studied to evaluate conference businesses widely in previous literature, where they were not meant to build a structural equation modeling for conference success in Jordan but rather to test how close Jordan is to Chengdu in the functionality of the mentioned attributes. However, the participants were required to evaluate conferencing issues with the following degrees: outstanding, Better than Average, About Average or Less than average. The questions were validated by a panel of experts and academicians from Jordan and Chengdu/Sichuan University, where after that, the answers of the participants were tested to be reliable to conduct the study with an alpha Cronbach coefficient =.79

4.7. Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the sample of study in frequency tables and graphics. In addition, means, weighted mean and standard deviation were computed. Finally, data were analyzed using differences in variance using ANOVA test to test the significance of differences between the means of the answers of the participants in both countries Chengdu and Jordan

5. Findings from Chengdu and Jordan

This section will present a description for both samples of the study. Table one shows a brief description of the two samples taken from Chengdu and Jordan. To explain this table, for example, for gender, the number of males in Chengdu was 29 and the females was 21, while in Jordan the number of males in the sample was 26 and 25 of female and so forth for the rest of the tables, i.e. Age, Education, citizenship, Number of conferences attended by each participants, the number of sessions chaired by participants and the number of times serving as a discussant in a conference.

Table (1): Sample description

Demographic variables	attribute	Chengdu	Jordan
Gender	M	29	26
	F	21	24
Age	18-25	7	5
	26-35	5	10
	36-50	12	7
	51- up	26	28
Education	Faculty (do you mean bachelor)	37	28
	Master Or PhD	13	22
citizenship	Local	26	28
	Foreign	24	22
The Number of conferences attended	Less than 3 times	10	8
	3-5 times	12	15
	more than 5 times	28	27
The Number of sessions chaired by a participant	yes	21	19
	no	29	31
Number of times serving as a discussant	yes	21	23
	no	29	27

Table (2): statistics for the study sample showing the weighted average of the responses

Evaluation Paragraph	country	N	Mean	Weighted Average	Degree	Std. Deviation
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Ch1	50	3.6200	90.50%	High	.63535
	Jo1	50	3.0600	76.50%	High	1.13227
your rating to the Technical Support provided	Ch2	50	2.7400	68.50%	Mild	.87622
	Jo2	50	3.6000	90.00%	High	.69985
your rating to the Organization of the conference	Ch3	50	3.7200	93.00%	High	.45356
	Jo3	50	3.2400	81.00%	High	.87037
Your rating to the opportunity to network with people from other organizations?	Ch4	50	3.7000	92.50%	High	.46291
	Jo4	50	3.1400	78.50%	High	1.03036
Your rating to the knowledge(venue) gained in being applicable after the conference	Ch5	50	3.5200	88.00%	High	.70682
	Jo5	50	2.2800	57.00%	Mild	.75701

Evaluation Paragraph	country	N	Mean	Weighted Average	Degree	Std. Deviation
Your rating to your expectations based on what has been promised by the conference	Ch6	50	2.2800	57.00%	Mild	.60744
	Jo6	50	3.0600	76.50%	High	.93481
Your rating to the overall quality of the presentations, events and programs	Ch7	50	2.9000	72.50%	Mild	.95298
	Jo7	50	3.7800	94.50%	High	.41845
your overall evaluation of the conference industry	Ch8	50	3.7200	93.00%	High	.57286
	Jo8	50	3.1600	79.00%	High	.97646
Your rating to climate issues	Ch9	50	2.32	58.00%	High	.57286
	Jo9	50	3.14	78.50%	High	.97646
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Ch10	50	3.78	94.50%	High	0.54248
	Jo10	50	2.94	73.50%	Low	0.95640
Your rating to the stability of the political environment	Ch11	50	3.72	93.00%	High	0.45355
	Jo11	50	3.14	78.50%	Mild	0.70015

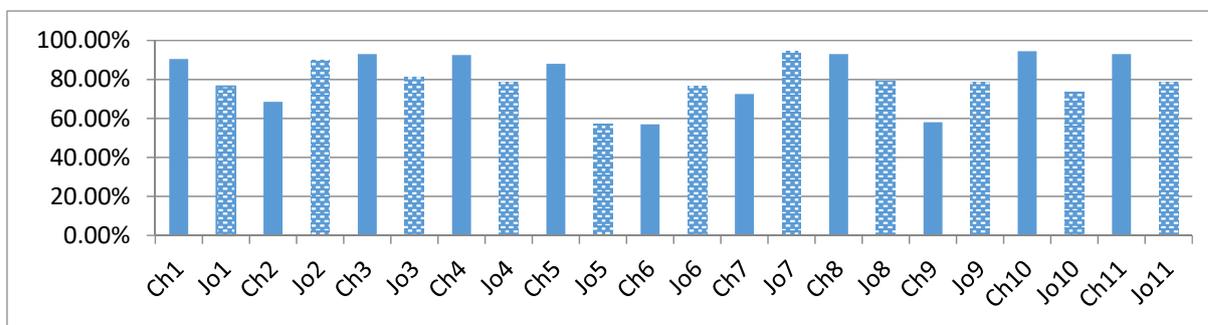


Diagram (2): statistics for the study sample showing the weighted average of the responses: from top to bottom and Chengdu first

Table (2) and diagram (2) present the weighted average for the answers of all the questions of the participants in both samples independently. For example, the paragraph "Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference" has a weighted average for Chengdu respondents of 90.50% and 76.50% for Jordan respondents and a standard deviation of .63535 for Chengdu respondents and 1.13227 for Jordan respondents and so forth for the rest of the paragraphs, with regards to the diagram, the first column to the left shows Chengdu answers on the first question, while the second column shows the answers of Jordan sample on the first questions, then comes the second question and so on for the rest of the questions. However, the lowest score for Jordan was "Your rating to the knowledge (venue) gained in being applicable after the conference which was 57.00% where the highest was the rating which was 94.50% while Chengdu scored the lowest in "Your rating to your expectations based on what has been promised by the conference" which was 57.00% where the highest was for "Your rating to the stability of the political environment" which was 94.50%. In addition to this, Table (3) shows the results of One Way ANOVA test which tests whether differences between the average means of the answers of Chengdu participants and the average means of the answers of the Jordanian participants on each paragraph are significant at ($\alpha \leq .05$) or not.

Table (3) shows that the difference between the means of Chengdu and Jordan is significant as "sig" is less than .05, where the Sum of Squares between Groups and Within Groups are 7.840 and 82.600 respectively. In addition more ANOVA tests were carried out within each group in table 4 and table 5.

Evaluation/Chengdu (X) Jordan		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Between Groups	7.840	1	7.840	9.302	.003
	Within Groups	82.600	98	.843		
your rating to the Technical Support provided	Between Groups	18.490	1	18.490	29.406	.000
	Within Groups	61.620	98	.629		
your rating to the Organization of the conference	Between Groups	5.760	1	5.760	11.959	.001
	Within Groups	47.200	98	.482		
Your rating to the opportunity to network with people from other organizations?	Between Groups	7.840	1	7.840	12.289	.001
	Within Groups	62.520	98	.638		
Your rating to the knowledge(venue) gained in being applicable after the conference	Between Groups	38.440	1	38.440	71.673	.000
	Within Groups	52.560	98	.536		
Your rating to your expectations based on what has been promised by the conference	Between Groups	15.210	1	15.210	24.476	.000
	Within Groups	60.900	98	.621		
Your rating to the overall quality of the presentations, events and programs	Between Groups	19.360	1	19.360	35.744	.000
	Within Groups	53.080	98	.542		
your overall evaluation of the conference you are attending	Between Groups	7.840	1	7.840	12.234	.001
	Within Groups	62.800	98	.641		
Your rating to climate issues	Between Groups	16.810	1	16.810	23.910	.000
	Within Groups	68.900	98	.703		
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Between Groups	17.640	1	17.640	32.373	.000
	Within Groups	53.400	98	.545		
Your rating to the stability of the political environment	Between Groups	8.410	1	8.410	24.170	.000
	Within Groups	34.100	98	.348		

gender		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Your rating to the stability of the political environment	Between Groups	1.394	1	1.394	7.701	.008
	Within Groups	8.686	48	.181		
age		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Your rating to climate issues	Between Groups	20.114	3	6.705	12.454	.000
	Within Groups	24.766	46	.538		
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Between Groups	1.338	3	.446	2.834	.048
	Within Groups	7.242	46	.157		
Number of conferences						
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Between Groups	2.673	2	1.336	3.672	.033
	Within Groups	17.107	47	.364		
Your rating to climate issues	Between Groups	6.435	2	3.217	3.933	.026
	Within Groups	38.445	47	.818		
Your rating to the stability of the political environment	Between Groups	1.456	2	.728	3.968	.026
	Within Groups	8.624	47	.183		

Have you chaired a session						
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Between Groups	2.069	1	2.069	5.607	.022
	Within Groups	17.711	48	.369		
Your rating to the stability of the political environment	Between Groups	1.236	1	1.236	6.708	.013
	Within Groups	8.844	48	.184		
have you served as a discussant						
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Between Groups	2.069	1	2.069	5.607	.022
	Within Groups	17.711	48	.369		
Your rating to climate issues	Between Groups	4.351	1	4.351	5.153	.028
	Within Groups	40.529	48	.844		

Chengdu Sample showed in table 4 no significant statistical differences attributed to education and citizenship only, while Jordan sample showed in table 5 no significant statistical differences attributed to education, citizenship and the number of conferences. However, both samples showed significant statistical differences only in attributes shown in table 4 and table 5

Table (5): ANOVA TEST FOR JORDAN SAMPLE

gender		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Your rating to the opportunity to network with people from other organizations?	Between Groups	7.446	1	7.446	8.019	.007
	Within Groups	44.574	48	.929		
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Between Groups	8.733	1	8.733	11.617	.001
	Within Groups	36.087	48	.752		
age						
Your rating to the opportunity to network with people from other organizations?	Between Groups	9.641	3	3.214	3.488	.023
	Within Groups	42.379	46	.921		
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Between Groups	9.291	3	3.097	4.010	.013
	Within Groups	35.529	46	.772		
Have you chaired a session						
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Between Groups	7.092	1	7.092	6.108	.017
	Within Groups	55.728	48	1.161		
Your rating to the opportunity to network with people from other organizations?	Between Groups	11.541	1	11.541	13.686	.001
	Within Groups	40.479	48	.843		
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Between Groups	11.941	1	11.941	17.432	.000
	Within Groups	32.879	48	.685		
have you served as a discussant						
Your rating to the registration and communication processes prior to the conference	Between Groups	5.654	1	5.654	4.748	.034
	Within Groups	57.166	48	1.191		
Your rating to the opportunity to network with people from other organizations?	Between Groups	6.844	1	6.844	7.272	.010
	Within Groups	45.176	48	.941		
Your rating to the fast growing developed economy	Between Groups	9.081	1	9.081	12.196	.001
	Within Groups	35.739	48	.745		

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In this section we will discuss the findings across the case studies so that we can answer the posed questions:

How far is Jordan from being a well-developed destination as Chengdu?

Based on the results obtained in the analysis of the attendees' evaluation to the conferences attributes in Jordan and Chengdu, it is very obvious from the weighted average the different attributes that push the attendees to more likely favor conferences in Chengdu over Jordan. However, before we proceed, the results revealed two major issues: First there is always a difference between Jordan and Chengdu in terms of the level of advancement in the conferencing services or industry. This was expressed or concluded in our study, by the degrees of customers satisfactions which ranged from being outstanding to below the average. Second, the difference is significant and in favor of Chengdu in most cases which means that Chengdu is outperforming Jordan in this industry. As revealed, Chengdu scored higher in the following attributes: registration and communication processes prior to the conference, 90.50% to Chengdu and 76.50% to Jordan; the Organization of the conference, 93.00% to Chengdu and 81.00% to Jordan; the opportunity to network with people from other organizations with a weighted average of 92.50% to Chengdu and 78.50% to Jordan, the knowledge(venue) gained in being applicable after the conference with a weighted average of 88.00% to Chengdu and 57.00% to Jordan and the overall evaluation of the conference with a weighted average of 93.00%to Chengdu and 79.00%to Jordan, rating to the fast growing developed economy, 94.50%to Chengdu and 73.50%to Jordan and rating to the stability of the political environment, 93.00%to Chengdu and 78.50%to Jordan.

However, Jordan is outperforming Chengdu in " Technical Support " with an average mean of 68.50%to Chengdu and 90.00%to Jordan and " expectations based on what has been promised by the conference organizer" with an average mean of 57.00%to Chengdu and 76.50%to Jordan, the overall quality of the presentations, events and programs with a weighted average of 72.50%for Chengdu and 94.50%for Jordan and in the satisfaction of the climate issues with a weighted average of 58.00%to Chengdu and 78.50%to Jordan. In fact Jordan being advancing ahead of Chengdu in four attributes out of eleven may mean that Jordan is on the right track to follow leading countries in conference industry. This also means that Jordan is working hard and seriously towards being successful in this business, as in no way that one can outperform Chengdu in four attributes, out of nine, without having infrastructure and potentials to succeed in the other attributes.

What is the major key factor to advance to be a well destination country?

High scores of Chengdu over Jordan in registration and communication processes prior to the conference, the Organization of the conference, the knowledge (venue) gained, the opportunity to network with people from other organizations and the overall evaluation of the conference industry, in being applicable after the conference, the fast growing developed economy and the stability of the political environment does not mean that such services in Jordan are bad at all, as they might be better than somewhere else. In this regard, Jordan was announced once as being first in the Middle East. Not only this, but the Dead Sea was declared in the newspaper as sitting on the throne of world conference industry. Nevertheless, conference organizers in public or local sector, should pay more attention to overall quality of the conference, should improve their service, and should focus on every elements or attributes that may participate in the overall success of the conference industry as a whole. These include, but not limited to, program, tech support, opportunities for networking, gaining new knowledge and more importantly, the stability of the political environment. However, although there are differences and these differences are significant and most of the time are in favor of Chengdu, it can be argued that the respondents were as highly satisfied with conferences in Chengdu as in Jordan. This argument may be supported by three reasons. First, Jordan is a new country to the world of conferences and lacks, somehow, experiences in this field. Second, Jordan is still unknown in this industry. Third, the infrastructure that seems to have nothing to do with the conference have certainly an impact on the evaluation of the conference. For example, in the sixth paragraph, Jordan gave more than expected. This is opposite to what happens in Chengdu. In addition, Chengdu did not show any difference attributed to education and citizenship, while Jordan did to education, citizenship and the number of conferences. However, all significant statistical differences indicate that Jordan still have the opportunity to get closer to Chengdu if the reasons behind these differences are properly resolved. In fact, it seems

that despite the high quality of the conferences themselves in Jordan, there seem to be external factors that have affected the general evaluation of the conference from the participants' point of views. However, these issues may be overcome by more experience, because knowing the reasons will lead to appropriate solutions.

Conclusion

From the previous results and discussions, the researcher can draw the following conclusions:

First, it is very obvious from the analysis that Jordan seems to be working hard and seriously towards being successful in this business, as it outperforms Chengdu in some conference attributes (4 out of 11 attributes). Second, which is more important, the study revealed that the success of conference industry is not more reliant on the quality of the conferences themselves (paragraph 7), but rather on the overall (paragraph 8). Therefore, the higher rate of paragraph (8) is the most important to look or seek for the success of the conference industry in Jordan as well as anywhere else in the world. This means that organizers of conferences should not neglect the focus on other activities and other programs that are attached to the conference in order to give a better impression or achieve customer satisfaction, which is the first and the last in the conference industry. This means that satisfaction rises, jointly, from previous experiences, in gaining new knowledge and conference program, etc., are the key factors behind influencing conference attendance. This is obvious by looking at the significant differences in the average means of the number of conferences attended, the Number of times chairing a session and finally, the Number of times serving as a discussant. However, to put things together, there must be one step to be taken further by the organizers, which is to pay attention to the fact that conference attributes or elements work together and dependently, i.e. in a very holistic way, I would say very close to what happens in Chengdu. This means, if every single element is prepared to work fine, unfortunately the conference may fail to satisfy customers, because of the lack of coordination and control between these elements. In fact, in Jordan, organizers should pay more attention to this point of view as it could possibly be the missing link that may explain why Chengdu is outperforming Jordan since Jordan is highly prepared and equipped to do successful conferencing on the one hand and on the other hand, it may explain why Jordan is still about to succeed in spite of the slow growing developed economy and possibly the instability of the political environment, especially in the surrounding region as Syria and Iraq, as perceived by those organizations who seek locations for the large professional associations. In fact, this, as a significant contribution of this research, supports and can be supported by (Yang & Tan, 2017) who believes that innovative conference concepts have the upper hand on any other attributes, and consequently, decision makers in Jordan must, fully, pay attention to such matter, should they intend to boost their conference industry the way Chengdu does.

On the whole, Jordan as a conference destination has been doing a great effort in promoting Jordan as a favored conference destination, but most of the problems related to conference business such as infrastructures enhancement and a well-organized conferences cannot be achieved by the convention industry alone. Cooperation from all the stakeholders including the government is needed to improve conference facilities and infrastructures. This means that Jordan will be and remain as one of the pioneering and competitive conference destination in the Middle East as long as Jordan can overcome the weaknesses that inhibit its conference business from improvement and by continuously taking advantages of its strength.

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أهم المكونات التي تسهم في نقل أي بلد أو وجهة لتصبح متطورة في صناعة المؤتمرات: (دراسة مقارنة بين الأردن وتشنغدو-الصين)

سهيرة الكيلاني*

ملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى الكشف عن أهم المكونات التي تسهم في نقل أي بلد أو وجهة لتصبح متطورة في صناعة المؤتمرات. تم استخدام المنهج الكمي باستخدام الاستبانة لإجراء مقارنة ما بين الأردن كبلد نام و تشنغدو -الصين كبلد متطور في هذا المجال، وتألقت العينة من 50 مشارك من كل بلد من المشاركين في المؤتمرات. من أهم نتائج الدراسة أن الأردن في طريقها لفعل ذلك إضافة إلى ذلك، بينت أن صناعة المؤتمرات لا تقوم على جودة مكوناتها، وإنما على تناسقها وتكاملها كوحدة واحدة بالدرجة الأولى، إذ إن التركيز على جهة أو مكونة دون الأخرى سيكون مدعاة للفشل للوصول إلى درجة متقدمة في صناعة المؤتمرات.

الكلمات الدالة: وجهة متطورة، وجهة نامية، صناعة المؤتمرات، الأردن، تشنغدو-الصين.

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