

The Impact of Conference Facilities on Attendee's Satisfaction

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to determine the effect of conference facilities on conference attendee satisfaction. The study used an integrative model using PLS and using SPSS to analyse the descriptive data. One hundred eighty survey forms were distributed to conference attendees in Sharm El-Sheikh hotels. A response rate of 79.4% was achieved, out of which 180 were returned, and 143 usable ones were valid. The result of the study demonstrated that accessibility, conference facility and site attractions significantly affect conference attendees' satisfaction. Moreover, conference attendees' satisfaction is not much impacted by perceived value. The study has significant academic implications for upcoming studies in the tourism and hospitality industry. Hotel managers, event managers and conference organizers have to pay attention to the conference facilities and conference agenda and offer a variety of activities during the conference to gain attendees' satisfaction. Moreover, conference organizers have to offer visits to the city site attraction during the conference days to attract more attendees.

Keywords: Conference, Accessibility, Perceived value, Facility services, Attendee Satisfaction

Introduction

The conference sector is one of the rapid-growing industries, especially after corona pandemic, which has impacted postponing many conferences and events due to the lockdown (Al-Salami and Abdalla, 2022). Moreover, conferences form an essential part of the event business sector (Liang & Latip, 2018). The demand for conferences has been increasing globally and locally. Conferences have become a competitive industry. Therefore, this competition has made hotels and event managers pay more attention to the facilities and services they offer during conference time (Halim & Mokhtar, 2016). Accordingly, conference attendees' satisfaction plays an essential role in determining the conference's success (Hashemi et al., 2020). It has become difficult to give targeted attendees a choice of conferences. Targeted conference attendees weigh a variety of considerations when deciding which conference to attend. (Deery & Jago, 2010). To gain more competitive advantage and increase conference attendance, further studies in the area of conferences are needed (Kim et al., 2012). Understanding the primary elements that influence participants' decisions when selecting a particular conference to attend is vital for hotel management and conference organizers (Chatzigeorgiou et al., 2017).

Research in identifying the key factors of conference facilities and their effect on attendees' satisfaction is growing. Egypt, especially Sharm el sheikh hosts many conferences during the year. Moreover, it hosts one of the well-known conferences every year (world youth forum), also Sharm el sheikh hosts Cop 27, the united nation climate change conference. Studies have focused on identifying some of the conferences' key success factors. In this vein, determining

the key factors of conference facilities (Accessibility, Facility Services, Site Attraction and Perceived Value) and measuring their effect on attendees' satisfaction is essential.

Literature Review

Accessibility

Accessibility tends to be one of the most essential factors in the convention and conference industry. Hence, accessibility has to be considered when planning conferences. Accessibility is essential for the tourism sector's sustainability as it connects travelers to their destinations (Roslan *et al.*, 2018). Accessibility is reaching a certain destination with ease, which represents tourist markets and external transport. It is calculated based on the distance travelled, the amount of time required to get there, and the expense of transportation (Jamaludin and Kadir, 2012). According to a study by Lee and Min (2013), accessibility is still one of the key elements for customer satisfaction and good word-of-mouth (WOM), which enhances the likelihood that a customer will return. As a result, this study uses accessibility as a factor in determining attendees' satisfaction. Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H1: Accessibility has a direct effect on conference attendees' satisfaction

Facility Service

Academics and Conference organizers have realized that facility service is crucial to the success of any conference. Hotel managers have to offer good service with high quality. This is due to increased competition among conference and convention centres (Lim & Zhu, 2018). Conference facility service can be identified as all of the services received by attendees from the start of the conference until its conclusion (Kim *et al.*, 2012). Lee *et al.* (2015) stated that facility service and its features have the potential to affect how effective the conference is and accordingly affect the attendee's experience. In the same study, he mentioned the key main criteria of any conference success, which are facility services, security, staff competence and conference hall. Thus, there is a need to understand facility service as it has a direct influence on the attendee's experience. There have been many research papers in the field of conferences and conventions showing that service facility has an influence on attendees' satisfaction (Jung and Tanford, 2017). From the above-mentioned, the following hypothesis has been suggested.

H2: Facility service has a direct effect on conference attendees' satisfaction

Site Attraction

Visiting site attractions at the conference host city is one of the main items that could attract attendees to sign up and join a conference. According to Ngwira and Kankhuni (2018), tourist attractions are a primary component for tourism destinations to be successful, as it is considered one of the main purposes of travelling. An attraction could be defined as a physical or cultural component of a specific place that is capable of satisfying tourists' needs (Navarro, 2015). A study conducted by Leo *et al.* (2021) proved that city attraction is one of the primary motives to visit a certain destination or decide on a specific city. In this vein, choosing a city to conduct a conference that is reached with tourist attractions would attract more attendees if the conference agenda has time for visiting those attractions. Park *et al.* (2014), proposed that the most important factors for choosing a conference venue include service quality, amenities provided, accessibility, and destination attractions. Moreover, visiting destination attractions while attending a conference would increase the attendee's satisfaction. From the above-mentioned, the following hypothesis has been suggested.

H3: City site attraction has a direct effect on conference attendees' satisfaction

Perceived value

According to Sevilmiş and Çvik (2021), value can be defined as the theoretical measure that helps to attain the meaning of something, approving that something is worth it. While perceived value can be defined as the customer perception of a service, especially when they compare it with other services offered by competitors (Makore et al., 2022). According to several other studies, there is a trade-off between some benefits and sacrifices for the customer's perceived value (Aulia et al., 2016). Graf and Maas (2014) stated that perceived value has three main angles, nothing the values, desired value judgment and desired value. Values are considered the main factor that guides human behavior, while desired customer value is the perceptions of the customer about the type of service needed, and value judgement is the evaluation by the customer of the value provided by the supplier. Recently, perceived value has received academic attention since it has an influence on customer decisions (El-Adly, 2018). However, still, perceived value has insufficient literature review in the tourism and hospitality sector, especially in the conference and conventions research. Some researchers have investigated the perceived value dimensions and their effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Al-Sabbahy and Reily, 2016; Eid and El-Gohary 2014). Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H4: Value has a direct effect on conference attendees' satisfaction

Conference attendee's satisfaction

The conference's success depends on achieving its attendees' satisfaction as it leads to preserving the reputation and convincing the attendees to rejoin and attend the same conference if it is happening annually (Hussien and Rashwan, 2022). According to Cobanoglu et al. (2013), satisfaction can be achieved when the conference attendees receive high-quality services than they expected, and this is the goal for the tourism and hospitality sector, not only the event management sector. In this vein, many researchers have proved that guest satisfaction has a direct and significant impact on guest loyalty (Gogoi, 2020; Woratschek *et al.*, 2019; Qomariah, 2017). Kotler *et al.* (2016) have stated that attracting new customers could cost five times more than servicing an existing customer.

Methodology

Data collection was done using a questionnaire. The question has been adapted from different studies. The accessibility, facility services and site attraction measures have been adjusted from a study conducted by (Hashemi *et al.* (2020). While perceived value and guest satisfaction have been adopted from a study conducted by (Hoyt and Whyte, 2011). The questionnaire measures were discussed with some of the academic staff, event planners, and experts in the tourism and hospitality industry. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first one consists of 15 items where conference attendees were asked to rate their experience in terms of accessibility, facility services, site attractions, perceived and how those items affect their satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale: one = "strongly disagree," two = "disagree," three = "undecided," four = "agree," and five = "strongly agree". The second part asked conference attendees for their personal data (i.e., gender, age, education, and marital status). A self-administrated survey was distributed to 180 conference attendees in Sharm el sheikh, and 143 responses were valid for analysis.

Table 1.
Survey items and sources

Factor	Item	Measure	Source
Accessibility	AC1	It is easy to arrive at the conference venue from the international airport	Hashemi <i>et al.</i> (2020)
	AC2	The transportation cost at the conference city is reasonable	
	AC3	Public transportation at the conference city is easily accessed with a good quality	
Facility Services	FS1	The conference hall has a well- equipped facilities	
	FS2	The customer services team at the conference are helpful and friendly	
	FS3	The conference agenda is available and accurate	
Site Attraction	SA1	The conference timetable offered a chance to visit tourist attractions.	
	SA2	A range of entertainment was available at the convention.	
	SA3	The conference city is quite appealing.	
Perceived Value	PV1	This conference's registration costs are comparable to those of other similar events.	Hoyt and Whyte (2011)
	PV2	The pricing of the workshops was reasonable.	
	PV3	For the money I spent, I received extraordinary value.	
Guest Satisfaction	GS1	My experience at the conference was satisfying	
	GS2	The conference met my expectations.	
	GS3	The conference workshops were very beneficial	

Data analysis

SPSS version 20 with the SmartPLS (SEM) application, version 8.80. were applied to the data analysis. The measurement model of satisfaction was measured using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Additionally, each factor's reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Cronbach's alpha's minimum value was 0.7.

Results

Respondents' Demographics

The total number of responses is shown in Table 2, with 94 (65.7%) female and 49 (34.3%) men. In addition, 31 (21.7%) respondents are between the ages of 18 and 25. In addition, 60 (41.9%) respondents are between the ages of 26 and 35. Regarding the academic level, half of the respondents (51.8%) have a PhD degree, (33.6%) have a master's degree while (26.6) have a bachelor's degree. Moreover, (62.9%) of the respondents are single, while (37.1%) are married.

Table 2 Demographic data of the respondents (N = 286)

Variables		Frequencies	Percentage
Gender			
	Female	94	65.7
	Male	49	34.3
Age (years)			
	18–25	31	21.7
	26–35	60	41.9
	36–45	52	36.4
Education			
	Students	6	4.2
	Bachelor's degree	38	26.6
	Master's degree	48	33.6
	PhD	51	35.6
Marital Status			
	Single	90	62.9
	Married	53	37.1

Descriptive analysis

SmartPLS was used to analyze conference facilities (Accessibility, Facility services, site attraction and perceived value) moreover items for customer satisfaction. 15 items were calculated by means, standard deviation, and factor loading, as shown in Table 3. Almost all the items passed the acceptable level of 0.7, assuring the suitability of the items for the analysis.

Table 3**A descriptive analysis of the factors influencing conference attendees' satisfaction**

Factor	Item	Mean	St. deviation	Factor loading
Accessibility	AC1	3.769	0.994	0.945
	AC2	3.594	0.863	0.801
	AC3	3.224	1.271	0.739
Facility Services	FS1	4.189	0.923	0.947
	FS2	4.413	0.814	0.934
	FS3	3.965	1.131	0.926
Site Attraction	SA1	3.643	0.919	0.247
	SA2	3.706	1.023	0.886
	SA3	4.21	1.115	0.884
Perceived Value	PV1	3.545	0.687	0.590
	PV2	3.622	0.851	0.934
	PV3	3.301	1.018	0.888
Conference attendees Satisfaction	GS1	4.161	0.833	0.950
	GS2	4.063	0.838	0.855
	GS3	3.671	1.016	0.877

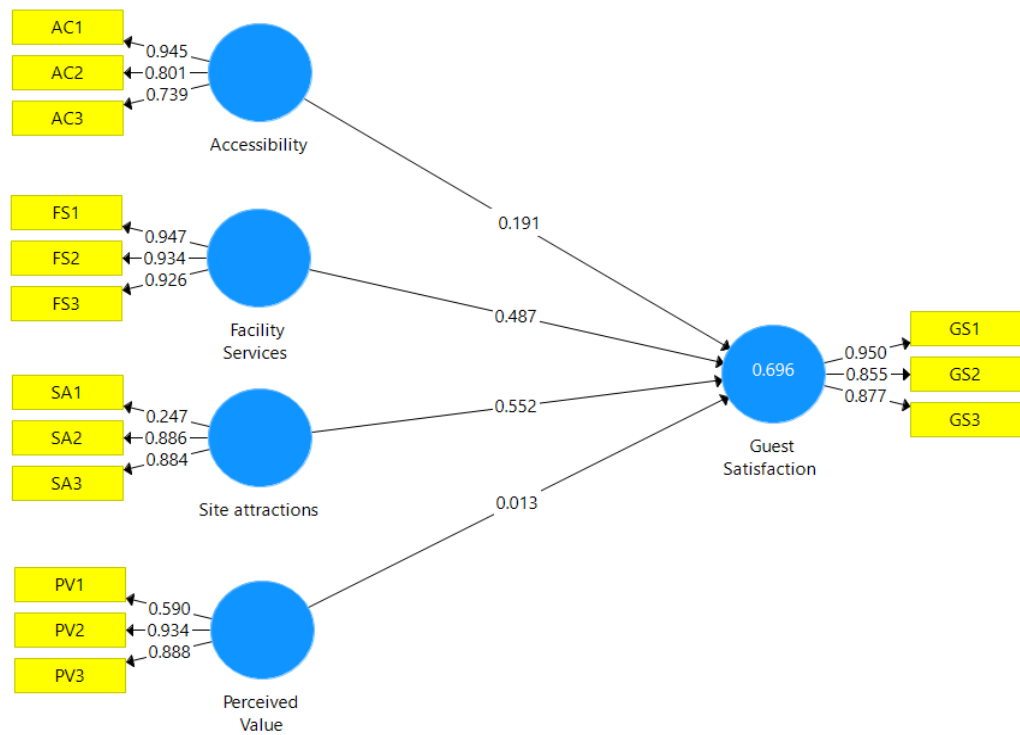


Figure 1. Structure equation model

Table 4 Variable correlation of the square root of AVE

	Latent Variable						
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Accessibility	0.833					
2	Facility services	0.506	0.936				
3	Attendees satisfaction	0.316	0.703	0.895			
4	Perceived value	0.138	0.443	0.490	0.818		
5	Site attraction	0.469	0.556	0.740	0.522	0.737	

Boldface values show the square roots of AVE

Testing research hypothesis

Table 5 and fig. 1 show the relationship between the study items, whether it is (direct or indirect). The study result showed that accessibility has a positive relation with attendee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.191$, $t\text{-value} = 2.592$, $P < 0.001$), accordingly, H1 is approved. In other words, accessibility is considered one of the main factors that affect attendees’ satisfaction. Facility service has a direct impact on attendee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.487$, $t\text{-value} = 5.929$, $P < 0.005$) The result showed significance which supported H2. The previous result has shown the importance of facility service in achieving attendee satisfaction. Moreover, site attraction has an impact on attendee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.552$, $t\text{-value} = 4.547$, $P < 0.005$) supporting H3. In the opposite of the previous results, the perceived value does not affect the attendee’s satisfaction ($\beta = 0.013$, $t\text{-value} = 0.176$). In other words, perceived value does not contribute to the attendees’ satisfaction.

Table 5 Research Hypothesis Results

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std. Beta	T-value	P-value	Results
H1	Accessibility → Attendees satisfaction	0.191	2.592	0.010	Supported
H2	Facility services → Attendees satisfaction	0.487	5.929	0.000	Supported
H3	Site attraction → Attendees satisfaction	0.552	4.547	0.000	Supported
H4	Perceived value → Attendees satisfaction	0.013	0.176	0.860	Not Supported

Table 6 R-square of the endogenous latent variables

Construct	R ²	Result
Attendees Satisfaction	0.696	High

As shown in table 6, the R –square of the endogenous latent variables is 0.696, which is considered a high result value.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study investigated the effect of conference facilities on attendees' satisfaction in Sharm EL Sheikh. This study tested different factors of conference facilities; accessibility, facility services, site attractions and perceived value and their effect on attendees' satisfaction.

The study used a literature review from previous studies, integrated a model and distributed surveys for the practical part. The questionnaire was distributed at Egyptian hotels in Sharm El Sheikh (N=143). The findings supported three variables from the proposed model. First, it indicates the positive impact of accessibility on conference attendees' satisfaction. This is consistent with the previous study conducted by (Lee and Min, 2013). The study also showed the significant effect of facility service on attendees' satisfaction. This result aligned with the study conducted by (Jung and Tanford, 2017). Moreover, site attraction has a direct effect on conference attendees' satisfaction. On the contrary, the perceived value had no significant effect on the attendees' satisfaction. The current study adds to the literature on conferences and conventions and the various variables that influence attendees' satisfaction. In this research, a conceptual model of conference facility factors was tested. and their effect on attendee satisfaction to guide conference organizers about the most effective factor to consider while organizing a conference. to use as a competitive advantage for the restaurant to increase its income and gain a good reputation.

Theoretical and practical implications

The study offered theoretical and practical implications. **Theoretically**, the recent study has tested the factors of conference facilities. The Facility Services ($\beta = 0.487$) and site attractions ($\beta = 0.552$) tend to have the highest impact in increasing attendees' satisfaction. Accessibility comes in third place, affecting satisfaction ($\beta = 0.191$). On the contrary, the study proved that perceived value has no impact on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.013$)

Practically, Hotel managers, event managers and conference organizers have to pay more attention to the factors that affect attendees' satisfaction. For example, in terms of accessibility, hotel managers have to offer a shuttle bus to transfer the attendees from and to the airport. Moreover, conference organizers have to offer visits to the city site attraction during the

conference days, which will have an impact on attendees to revisit and rejoin the conference again. Also, hotel managers have to pay attention to the services they offer inside the conference hall and maintain the equipment regularly.

Limitations and Upcoming Studies

The study distributed a questionnaire to get conference attendees' opinions about the conference facility. Therefore, interviews with hotel managers and conference organizers for future research could be held. Second, this study distributed a questionnaire in Sharm El Sheikh, while future research can conduct it in different cities in Egypt.

اثر مرافق المؤتمرات على رضا السادة الحاضرين للمؤتمر

المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة الى تحديد تأثير مرافق المؤتمرات على رضا السادة الحضور بالمؤتمر. استخدمت الدراسة نموذجًا تكامليًا باستخدام PLS واستخدام SPSS لتحليل البيانات الوصفية. تم توزيع مائة وثمانين استمارة إستبيان على الحاضرين في فنادق شرم الشيخ. تم تحقيق معدل استجابة بنسبة 79.4%، و تم إسترداد 180 أستمارة حيث ان 143 كانت صالحة منهم للاستخدام. وأظهرت نتيجة الدراسة أن إمكانية الوصول ومرافق المؤتمرات ومناطق الجذب في موقع المؤتمر تؤثر بشكل كبير على رضا الحاضرين للمؤتمر. علاوة على ذلك، فإن رضا الحاضرين في المؤتمر لا يتأثر كثيرًا بالقيمة المتوقعة. كان لمضمون الدراسة تأثير أكاديمياً مهماً للابحاث اللاحقة في صناعة السياحة والضيافة. حيث يتعين على مديري الفنادق ومديري الأحداث ومنظمي المؤتمرات الانتباه إلى مرافق المؤتمرات وجدول أعمال المؤتمر وتقديم مجموعة متنوعة من الأنشطة خلال المؤتمر لكسب رضا الحضور. علاوة على ذلك، يتعين على منظمي المؤتمر تقديم زيارات إلى مواقع الجذب السياحي بالمدينة خلال أيام المؤتمر لجذب المزيد من الحضور.

الكلمات الدالة: المؤتمر، إمكانية الوصول، القيمة المتوقعة، خدمات المرافق، رضا الحضور

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