Chapter 3 Conventions and Conferences

3.1 Significance of convention Business

Business tourism offers many benefits to its participants; it stimulates the economy, promotes local development, and through this touristic activity, travellers to get to visit the most beautiful places.

Imagine that you are an employee in a pharmaceutical company, participating in a large convention, where you can meet the most renowned scientists and the best professionals in the sector.

In addition to great professional knowledge, this business trip will also provide you with great personal experiences upon visiting a particular country, a place that may charm travellers with its extensive leisure activities / beautiful beaches/ infrastructure.

Conventions provide memorable experiences, and encourages MICE tourists to return to the region they got to know through Corporate Events for personal travel also

Conventions benefits are as below:

- It directly benefits the entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

- It boosts the local economy.

- It benefits the chosen city through economic growth, and also gives greater touristic prominence to the city.

- It creates new jobs, such as professionals hired to host the event.

- It benefits professionals such as taxi drivers, hoteliers, small business owners, and boosts cultural tourism. Travellers visiting the city go to places such as galleries, museums, shows, theatres,

- In addition, Team Building, a focal point for the professionals attending the event, is a great way for the development and improvement of professionals in business tourism

- Conventions will assist in improving the qualifications of the professionals who attend these events. The attendees also get the opportunity to visit different places, thus improving and boosting

the statistics for tourism and the local economy.

- Conventions provide benefits for all people and professionals involved, whether they are taxi drivers, hoteliers, small business owners, etc. The economy gets a boost, and our country gets visited by an increasing number of tourists, who can acquire and improve their professional skills in a country with impressive cultural wealth

3.2 Site selection: Selecting the right convention center
- **Factors for the site selection**
- **Site selection process**
- **Site requirements**
- **Types of facilities, hosting different events**

Factors for the site selection

The conventions industry has grown to become a very important part of the global tourism and hospitality sector. For cities, particularly, conventions have become one of their principal target markets. For this reason, Convention and Visitor Bureaux typically focus a great deal of their time and effort wooing large associations that are looking for an attractive host convention site.

An extensive review of past research and of the professional literature in the meetings and conventions industry identified eight categories of potentially important site attributes as follows:

• attributes that affect site accessibility,

• factors that relate to the level of local support behind the convention,

• the range and quality of various extra-conference opportunities beyond the convention,

• aspects concerning the suitability of accommodation facilities

• meeting facility attributes,

• sources and types of information available on the site,

• components of the general attractiveness of the site environment, and

• Other criteria such as risk, novelty of the site, promotion of association goals, etc.

A great deal of research suggests what the important site selection factors might be.

From among the above list of categories, the research estimated the utility or impact that each of 20 different site attributes exert on the selection of a host destination for the convention. These 20 attributes were selected based on the results of interviews with industry professionals. To achieve the aims of the project, a method known as CHOICE MODELLING was employed using data from a choice experiment carried out. This method is very suited to the aims of this research. It is scientifically rigorous and theoretically sound, being founded on the most up-to-date theories in choice and decision-making.

The major results from the study are as follows:

• The attractiveness of a site is strongly connected to the proximity of the site to convention participants. When a site requires a greater proportion of convention delegates to travel further, its competitiveness declines significantly. This is most notable when the weighted average flying time exceeds about 2.5 hours.

• Neither the level of unrestricted economy airfares nor discount airfares available to the site were found to be significant factors. A possible explanation is that, although a site needs to be accessible, the cost of air travel is borne by the attendee rather than the association, so that convention planners may have put little weight on this factor.

• The degree to which convention attendees needed to, or could, be accommodated on-site (i.e. in a hotel integrated with the convention facilities) versus off-site (i.e. in other separate hotels) proved to be a very important consideration. The attractiveness of a site is clearly much greater when many more or all attendees are able to stay in an integrated convention/ accommodation facility.

• The range of available accommodation, in terms of the quantity and quality of hotels to choose from, was found to have little influence. In contrast, the room rates for accommodation were found to be significant with attractiveness declining as room rates increase.

• The location of the accommodation relative to the airport (measured in terms of the average duration of a taxi trip) had no significant impact on site competitiveness up to travel times of 40 minutes.

• The anticipated weather at a convention site was found to have no influence on the likelihood of its selection. Weather may be a more important factor when site competitiveness is evaluated internationally.

• Not surprisingly, the cost of the convention venue was found to be highly statistically significant. Higher facility costs clearly hurt site competitiveness, but there was some evidence to also suggest that very inexpensive sites may also be unattractive. Such 'cheap' sites may signal poor facilities which might put the success of the convention at some risk.

• The perceived quality of the food provided at the convention site proved to be a very important factor. Improving food quality positively affects the likelihood that a site will be selected at all levels of perceived food quality.

• A site that offers attractive opportunities for entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, recreation and organised tours, or that provides either a unique physical setting or social/cultural setting, was found to be at a significant advantage.

• Somewhat surprisingly, neither the level of assistance expected to be provided by a local chapter of the association, nor the level of assistance expected from the local convention and visitor bureau, seemed to influence site selection.

• The quality of each of a convention site's exhibition space, plenary room, and break-out rooms were demonstrated in these research results to be highly significant factors. In contrast, the quality of the ball room/dining facilities were not factors that proved to be important.

• The availability of on-site audio/visual equipment and systems was found to be a statistically significant factor, when the alternative required the use of an off-site AV contractor.

When each of the convention site attributes discussed previously were ranked in terms of their order of importance (from most to least important) to site selection, the results were as follows:

• cost of the convention venue.

• food quality,

• suitability of the plenary room,
• mix of on-site versus off-site accommodation,

• proximity of the site to convention participants,

 suitability of the exhibition space,

• suitability of the break-out rooms,

• accommodation room rates,

• attractiveness of the physical setting,

• extent of available entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, recreation, and organised tours,

• availability of unrestricted economy airfares to the site,

• attractiveness of the social/cultural setting, and

• Availability of audio-visual systems and facilities.

Site selection process

The process through which meeting planners choose destinations for their events is of utmost importance to destinations around the world and has been researched in many different aspects. Attempts have been made to identify specific attributes that are important to both attendees and meeting planners, and the kind of information they are searching for in the planning process. Because of the growing competition within meeting destinations, the rise of second tier destinations, the latest recession, and increased popularity of events on cruise ships, understanding destination characteristics is even more important than ever.

A destination that wants to be considered as a viable meeting destination has to be included in the association's initial pool of options (evoked set), which means it has to be offered by one of the decision makers in the organization. Identifying and approaching these key players in the associations and marketing the destination to them increases the chances of it being chosen as the final location for the event. However when a destination configures the marketing plan, it needs to take the association's size, characteristics and budget under consideration.

Meeting planners put great importance on meeting rooms and facilities, and the hotel service quality while planning a conference. These top two attributes are followed by hotel room availability, the attractiveness of the location, safety/security and ease of transportation.

Site selection Process:

- Identify the meeting objectives(SMART objectives)
- Gather historical data
- Determine physical requirements
- Consider attendee expectations
- Select general area and type of facility
- Prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Review and evaluate choices
- Select Site

Questions to be kept in mind at selection stage;

What to achieve from the event? Organization's mission and objectives.

 Conduct feasibility study - Who to ask for direction?

Identify those deciding factors? - Conduct external and internal analysis

Identify the risk factors and challenges? - Look for opportunities and threats.

Are you ready to move forward with the plan? -Select appropriate strategy and operational plan.

Who is/ are in charge? - Take up the roles and responsibilities.

Ensure doing the right thing? - Adhere to the control system.

How to do it better next time? - Evaluation and feedback for future.

Site requirements

- Accessibility

<u>Cost</u> – the monetary expense of transportation and access

<u>Time</u> – the duration/distance of travel involved and the opportunity cost of that time

<u>Frequency</u> – the frequency of connections to the site

<u>Convenience</u> – the scheduling convenience of the connections

<u>Barriers</u> – the extent of any travel formalities that inhibit travel such as visas, customs, etc

- Local Support

<u>Local support</u> – the extent of assistance and backing offered by the local government body or the association

<u>Convention centre</u> – the extent of planning, logistical, and promotional support offered

Subsidies – the extent to which the destination offers to defray costs through rebates and subsidies

- Extra-conference Opportunities

Sightseeing – architecture, museums, monuments, attractions, parks, historical sites, local tours, etc.

Entertainment – restaurants, bars, theatres, nightclubs, etc.

Shopping – malls, major department stores, low prices, etc.

Recreation – sports and activities either as spectator or participant

- Professional opportunities

Visiting local clients, negotiations, business deals, selling, making contacts, etc.

- Accommodation Facilities

Capacity - The number of rooms available and whether more than a single   hotel is required

Cost – the cost of suitable accommodation at the site

Service – the perception of the standards of service

Security – the extent hotels provide a safe and secure environment

Availability – are the facilities available?

- Meeting Facilities

Capacity – ability of site to provide suitable sized facilities
Layout – suitability of the facility layout and floor plan
Cost – the cost of the meeting space required
Ambience – the ability of the facility to create an appropriate atmosphere and environment
Service – the perception of the standards of service
Security – the extent to which the facility provides a safe and secure meeting space
Availability – are the facilities available when required?

- Information

Experience - Has the site performed satisfactorily in the past?
Reputation – what is the reputation of the destination among other meeting planners
Marketing – the effectiveness of the destination's marketing activities

- Site Environment

Climate – the desirability of the destination's climate
Setting – the attractiveness of the destination's surroundings
Infrastructure – the suitability and standard of local infrastructure
Hospitality – the extent to which the host organisations and community excel in welcoming visitors

- Other Criteria

Risks – the possibility of strikes, natural disasters, boycotts, and other possible adverse events
Profitability – the extent to which the site would produce a profit (loss) for the convention
Association promotion – would the site ad credibility to the association and build membership?
Novelty – the extent to which the destination represents a novel location for the Association's next convention

Types of facilities, hosting different events

Different types of venues can be categorized according to four main intended purposes:
1. Hotels & Resorts
2. Convention Centers
3. Multi-purpose Facilities
4. Other Venues

1. Hotels & Resorts

Over the past 10 to 20 years, hotels and resorts haves positioned themselves as venues for MICE events apart from merely providing accommodations to MICE and leisure travellers

Convention Centers	Hotels & Resorts
Advantages	
• Designed especially to serve the purpose • Usually operated by professionals • Equipped to host any kind of MICE event • Easier to move exhibits in-out • Cheaper booth construction • Adequate parking spaces	• Accommodation rooms • Cheaper facilities rental (off-peak season) • Higher attendee capture rate • Usually higher quality catering service • Better overall atmosphere
Disadvantages	
• No accommodation rooms • Layouts difficult to organize in old centers • Space may be unavailable	• Facilities not especially for MICE event • May lack certain amenities • Exhibits may be difficult to manage • Tedious security measures on floor • Limited parking spaces

For exhibition managers, a major advantage in hosting exhibitions in hotels includes having complete control over the event since every function is under one roof
Having everyone in the same facility, walking in the same hallways and dining in same restaurants, hotels can create an atmosphere conducive to networking For some exhibition organizers with small to medium-sized exhibitions, hotels are usually cost-effective and easy-to-manage options since they do not have to transport attendees from one place to another One limitation is the size of the function rooms that may force events to be held in separate rooms

2. Convention Centers

Convention/exhibition centers are designed especially to host MICE events and combine every necessary amenity Convention centers previously used primarily to host exhibitions are now usedθ for smaller-scale meetings as well with empty spaces arranged and segregated into smaller meeting room areas

3. Multi-purpose Facilities

Multi-purpose facilities are the newest concept in MICE event venues with their focus on customization and personalization of layouts and configurations for each MICE event
Multi-purpose facilities are intended to host many small or large functions simultaneously, while keeping each one private and independent from the others and as they can host under one roof, it is easier to manage continuous flow of attendees

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Apart from venues mentioned, other venues serve different purposes and are used for specific MICE events

Sports Facilities/ Arena - Sports facilities, as the name suggests, are facilities intended to host both indoor (swimming, boxing) and outdoor (baseball, football, motorsports) sporting events. Such spacious facilities can be perfect locations to host certain MICE events with of a certain scale and type including concerts even though they often lack lighting and audio systems.

Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, Russia (image by Mos.ru)

Music Venues/ Theatres This type of facility is designed especially for concerts or live performances.

Sydney Opera House

Special Events have been grouped into four categories;

 Leisure Events
 Leisure events, thus, are any special event held for entertainment purposes or involving recreational activities These special events can be organized in both commercial and non-commercial form

 Personal Events
 Personal events are held to celebrate or commemorate a communal, societal or life-cycle occasion Personal events can be arranged for small groups invited to a private birthday party or a larger scale 500-guest wedding

Cultural Events
 Cultural events are special events associated with ceremony, tradition, art or religious aspects as a celebration or culture confirmation and are usually a prominent part of a larger cultural event

Organizational Events
 Almost every organizational activity is part of an organization's events with attendees being members of the same institution or in the same industry

3.3 Organizing a conference

Registration, Seating Arrangements, Documentation, Interpreting press relation, Computer Graphics, Teleconferencing, Recording and Publishing proceedings, Interpretation and language.

- ## Registration

  Organization and production of large-scale conferences and events requires professional expertise and experience, as well as the right tools to help plan and execute large and complex logistic and technical gatherings. One of the most important tools for successfully organizing conferences is a registration management system that supports a dedicated website and an online registration form that serves organizers and interested and registered participants prior to the conference, thus contributing to its overall success.

- ## Seating Arrangements

  Conference seating arrangements and room layouts provide access and comfort for delegates, setting the foundation for productive meetings, training sessions and functions.
  Handled correctly, everyone will feel settled and receptive to the proceedings.
  Organisers must select a conference venue proportionate to the number of people attending. Not only is this cost effective for the host, it is a strong indicator of how well the conference has been planned. Choosing the appropriate conference seating style will support the aim of the event and the goals of the presenter. Organisers must fully inspect the conference venue and think everything through from a delegate and presenter point of view.

  ### Conference Venue Do's and Don'ts

  1. Ensure easy access to seats and that the aisles are wide enough
  2. Accommodate people with special hearing, seeing or mobility needs
  3. Choose adjustable chairs for day-long training
  4. Place the entrance at the back of the room to avoid distraction
  5. Check that the speaker can be seen from the back of the room
  6. Speaker tables can have a skirt around the front to screen belongings

Large Groups (usually more than 40 delegates)

1. Cinema / Theatre Style
2. Classroom
3. Chevron and Modified Chevron
4. Banqueting for when meals are served after the conference

Cinema / Theatre Seating Style

This style of conference seating has rows of seats with aisles (3 columns) facing a stage or podium.

Best for - Formal presentations, lectures, Q&A sessions
Downside - No tables for note taking; no interaction between delegates

Classroom Seating Style

This style of conference seating has rows of tables with 2-4 seats each and aisles (3 columns) facing a stage or podium.

Best for - Note taking / PCs at presentations, training, sales talks
Downside - limited interaction between delegates

Chevron

Chevron style has a centre aisle with rows of 4 seats on either side (2 columns) facing a table, stage or podium. The chairs are in a line and angled inwards, with or without tables. Delegates can interact across the aisle and with the speaker.
Best for - Interaction; table space for notes / PC's and drinks,

Modified Chevron

This is the same as Theatre style, but the 2 outer columns are angled inwards to give better visibility for the side sections and there is more interaction.
Best for - Same as Theatre but with more interaction for discussions.

Banqueting Seating Style

This is the bigger version of Cabaret Style conference seating for small groups; seating between 6 - 10 delegates per round table with a rectangular speaker table at the front. It is used when the conference is followed by a meal. Tables should not be any bigger as it will cramp the room and hamper the dinner service.

Best for - Interactive conference before a meal / award ceremony
Downside - Not all chairs face the front; crowded, noisy over mealtime

Small Groups (usually less than 40 delegates)**Small Groups (usually less than 40 delegates)**
1. Boardroom
2. Hollow Square
3. U-Shape

Boardroom

Conference seating is around a long rectangular table with not more than 12 - 15 seats; over 15 and the people at the far end feel left out and form a separate unit.

Best for - Small meetings, training sessions, interviews
Downside - For delegates of the same or similar rank

Hollow Square / Rectangle

The tables are arranged together to form the shape with a space in the middle, conference seating is around the outside. Suitable for meetings where rank is not an issue.
Best for - Interaction with a facilitator; note taking
Downside - Visuals are awkward to use

U Shape

Tables are arranged to form the shape with seating around the outside. There can be a screen or a speaker table at the top of the "U". The centre area can be used for media camera people, demonstration and role play. Suitable for a maximum of 25 people.
Best for - Press conferences, collaboration, training, brainstorming, notes / PCs
Downside - No more than 25 delegates

- <u>Documentation</u>

  For any meeting/conference to take place in a procedural way, there are a few important and necessary documents involved without which the meeting will not go smoothly.

  The necessary documents for a meeting are:

Agenda

The agenda is the meeting plan. Document created by the PA, secretary or admin. It is then approved by the chairman and circulated to the other members who will be attending the meeting. It can be distributed either digitally or as hard copies. It is always best to have a few spare copies. It lays out the topics that need to be discussed and the tasks that need to be accomplished in the given time

Attendance sheet

An attendance sheet shall be kept to understand and gauge the success and popularity and other statistical data. To have accurate details, a few columns are included like, Name, Position, Contact number, Email address.

Glossary of terms and acronyms

Will include discussion of business where technical terms and acronyms will be used, and if there are attendees who will not be familiar with those terms and acronyms, it is always best to give a list of these with a brief description or meaning. This will help them follow the meeting with ease and stop too many unnecessary interruptions.

Taking notes (Minutes)

Taking notes is the step towards preparing the minutes. This is the main document in a meeting as everything that takes place or is discussed or decided is recorded. Notes are taken down by secretaries or administrators or a similar office person and they are written down in an agreed style following organisations policies and procedures. A template can be used for ease of note-taking.

Presentation papers/Brochures/Leaflets

Some meetings will have presentation papers. Although presentations are done on projectors, it is always good to give all the attendees a copy, so that they have a record of what was presented, and also it will help them note down important points that will be useful or helpful for them for future reference as the presentation goes on.

- ## Interpreting press relation

The interpretation at press conferences has much in common with interview interpretation, but with difference that press conference takes place in more official atmosphere, and questions are asked not by one-two, but by a large number of representatives of mass media at once. And, unlike interview interpretation, questions are practically never coordinated in advance with respondent and can be asked spontaneously by anyone who is present at press conference.

For interpretation at press conferences the skilled interpreter is usually invited, who has skills of both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation.

The interpreter has to be trim, behave confidently, and be very exact when interpreting. If he hasn't understood part of the answer, it is better to ask again once more, than fantasize and give out wrong interpretation.

It is desirable if possible, to inform the interpreter in advance about subject of press conference and those questions which can be mentioned. Then the interpreter will be able to prepare better for the interpretation, and his interpretation will be more certain and qualitative. If there is a prepared text of communiqué or press release, it is desirable to show them to the interpreter before press conference.

- ## Computer Graphics

Computer graphics are pictures created using computers and the representation of image data by a computer specifically with help from specialized graphic hardware and software. Basically, it is the representation and manipulation of image data by a computer. The interaction and understanding of computers and interpretation of data has been made easier because of computer graphics. The people working in this field have to be creative with innovative ideas, and good working knowledge of all software's related to graphics and hardware components. Computer graphics technology professionals use their knowledge and technical skills in graphic design and animation to design and create layouts, Web pages, and multimedia production.

Although, it may not be possible to hire a professional due to cost implications but could certainly be contracted out to the AVL contractor

- ## Teleconferencing

Teleconferencing means meeting through a telecommunications medium. It is a generic term for linking people between two or more locations by electronics. There are at least six types of teleconferencing: audio, audio graphic, computer, video, business television (BTV), and distance education. The methods used differ in the technology, but common factors contribute to the shared definition of teleconferencing:

- Use a telecommunications channel
- Link people at multiple locations
- Interactive to provide two-way communications
- Dynamic to require users' active participation

Videoconferencing increases efficiency and results in a more profitable use of limited resources. It is a very personal medium for human issues where face-to-face communications are necessary. When you can see and hear the person you are talking to on a television monitor, they respond as though you were in the same room together. It is an effective alternative to travel which can easily add up to weeks of non-productive time each year. With videoconferencing, you never have to leave the office. Documents are available, and experts can be on hand. Videoconferencing maximizes efficiency because it provides a way to

meet with several groups in different locations, at the same time.

As the limited resource of funding has decreased, limited resources now include instructors, parking spaces and buildings. Students now include time as limited resources. Teleconferencing enables institutions to share facilities and instructors which will increase their ability to serve students.

- ## Recording and Publishing proceedings

A conference proceeding is the published record of a conference, congress, symposium, or other meeting sponsored by a society or association, usually but not necessarily including abstracts or reports of papers presented by the participants

Conference proceedings are the collection of papers and/or posters that were presented at an association's conference or meeting. Conferences provide opportunities for people to present their research, and get input from other researchers and colleagues in their field

- ## Interpretation and language

There are more than 6,900 living languages across the world, and the language interpreting and translating service providers (translators) have seen constant growth over the years.

Language interpretation put in a simple terms means the facilitation of oral communication, either simultaneously or consecutively between people that speak and understand different languages. Language interpretation also refers to the facilitation of sign-language communication.

Language interpretation is a well-known service that has become imperative for both individual and organizations when they expand their business. Finding the right interpreter is of utmost importance in ensuring an accurate translation.

Translation also allows ideas and information to spread across cultures and this has allowed translation change history.

3.4 Convention Centre

- **Convention Centre Locations**

- **Types of Convention Centres and Facilities**

Please see below general rules in India

General features: It is very essential that the proposed convention centre should contain at least one convention hall, two mini convention halls, one exhibition hall, one restaurant and parking facilities as per details given below:-

1. Convention hall: Convention hall as the name suggests should have audio Visual conferencing equipment, facility for high fidelity recording, video projection/ video graphs etc. And skilled manpower at various levels.

The seating capacity in the hall may be in a classroom style in the following category:-
A) Above 1500pax or
B) 1200-1500 pax or
C) 800-1200 pax or
D) 300-800 pax

2. Mini convention halls: Mini Convention halls are equally important in Convention Centers as these halls are required for various seminars, committees, meetings etc. The seating capacity therefore, may be in a theatrical or classroom style to seat as follows:-
 A) 200-300 pax or
B) 100-200 pax or
C) 50-100 pax or
 D) 20-50 pax

 3. Exhibition hall: Exhibition Hall is another important feature in convention centre. Delegates to the convention as well as trade relative promoters take part in trade shows to promote their products during conventions. As such, it is essential that such exhibition hall should have a capacity to accommodate at least 20 booths of 3 mts by 3 mts in size excluding passages in between the booths.

4. Restaurants: Restaurants in the convention centers should confirm to the existing guidelines of HRACC laid down by the Ministry.

5. Parking: Parking facility for not less than 50 cars and five coaches.

6. Residential accommodation for delegates/ participants: Applicable only if, promoters, desire to have residential accommodation in the convention complex and the guidelines laid down by the Ministry in respect of star category hotels will apply.

In addition to the above facilities convention centre should include the following

Infrastructural facilities:-

1. Landscaped forefront
2. Exhibition Management Centre
3. Administrative facilities for corporate office including IITTM/ Internet et
4. Trade Show/ Fair Facilities such as Tourist Office, Bank and Money
     Changing facilities, Travel Desk, Press Lounge, VIP Lounges
5. Technical facilities such as plant room, electric substation, stores,
     Electric power back-up-system, fire hydrant etc.
6. Gate complex for stipulating entry and exit.
7. Information booths.
8. Public Convenience.
9. Stationary Shops and Kiosks.
10. Public Address System.
11. First aid with doctor on call facilities.
12. Security office and booths for security arrangements.
13. Storage complex for custom storage and handling etc.
14. Fire safety arrangements.
15. Locker facilities. In order to enhance the value of the above facilities there must be space for other ancillary activities also. This could include the following: i) Handicraft shops, souvenir shop.
             ii) Facility for the physically disabled person.
             iii) Other facility for enhancing customer satisfaction