

# On the Convention Bureau's Evaluation of its Regional Characteristics and Convention Facilities

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## Abstract

The convention industry produces great economic impact due to the fact that when conferences are held, delegates who participate stay longer than pleasure travelers, or those with other purposes. Many different stakeholders are involved in the convention industry as it is an essential factor in promoting inbound tourism in Japan. This study focuses on the evaluation of the convention bureau, taking into account its regional characteristics and convention facilities. A questionnaire survey was conducted at the 24th international Meetings Expo (IME 2014) held on December 9-10, 2014, at the Tokyo International Forum, Japan. Researchers distributed questionnaires directly to the convention bureaus during the IME 2014. The respondents' evaluation about their region and convention center was measured. Furthermore, the binary logistic regression was adopted to clarify how the duration of service affected their evaluation. This model is utilized in the case of a situation where mainly two possible results are expected. The results showed that there were some significant differences in duration of service.

*Keywords:* Convention bureau, Convention industry, Questionnaire survey,

## 1 Introduction

In 2015, the total number of foreign visitors in Japan reached over 19.7 million, the highest growth rate recorded since 1964. In the tourism industry, the convention is growing as one of the most important segments. The convention industry does not only benefit the local economy, but also acts as economic hubs to surrounding areas [1]. In addition, the convention industry produces great economic impact and is rapidly diversifying.

The convention industry brings about great economic impact because delegates who participate in the convention stay longer than pleasure travelers who have other purposes [2]. This triggers convention host cities to compete to attract more profitable exhibitions. With the tightening competition of international convention destinations among other competitive cities, marketing approaches to promote international conferences in the global market have become rapidly sophisticated and diversified. Such movement calls for the need for the Japanese gov-

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spondents regarded the capacity of facilities, quality of service, accessibility and price as most important. Lee [13] found roads and accessibility were highly valued by the organizers. In addition, the staff's fluency in major languages was also one of the necessary elements for conference organizers. Moreover, Qu, Li, and Chu [14] examined satisfaction levels of Hong Kong as an international conference destination. As a result, all respondents evaluated 20 site selection criteria. Among them, modern-audio-visual equipment, modern hotel facilities, and accessibility were ranked as the top three.

Kim, Guo, and Agrusa [15] regarded inexpensive travel cost, level of economic development, beautiful scenery, safety, good place for shopping, different cultural and historical resources, good weather, good leisure and recreation facilities, easiness to arrange travel plans, and well-equipped tourism facilities as important factors. Accessibility, capacity of accommodation facilities, local support, multi-language, and site environment as important factors are highly featured in the previous studies, thus proving the importance to consider these important factors to attract the international convention.

Though the previous studies point out that convention bureau plays a pivotal role throughout convention, there are very few studies on the topic. Therefore, this study focuses on its regional characteristics and convention facilities and sees the differences in the convention bureau's evaluation by duration of service.

### **3 Methodology**

#### *3.1 Overview*

The questionnaire survey was conducted at the 24th international Meetings Expo (IME 2014) held on December 9-10, 2014, at the Tokyo International Forum, Japan. IME is known as the only domestic tradeshow dedicated to MICE. There were 2050 visitors and 1402 exhibitors attending the IME 2014. The target population in the present study consists of convention bureaus exhibited at IME 2014. This questionnaire is to examine the convention bureaus' perceptions of their regions and convention centers.

#### *3.2 Data collection*

Researchers distributed questionnaires directly to the convention bureaus during the IME held on Dec 10, 2014. The questionnaire was composed of two parts.

In part one, respondents were asked 21 questions to rate characteristics of their region and convention centers. The questions consisted of 7 domains: area information, transportation system, local service, local area, condition of sites, convention facilities, and convention service.

The part asks the respondents about the characteristics of their region and convention center and was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These items were based on a literature review dealing with the importance of geographic conditions and convention centers.

Part two of the questionnaire included demographic information regarding the respondents' background such as: gender, age, workplace, job position in the convention bureau, years of experience in the convention industry, and number of international conventions they had hosted before.

During the IME 2014, researchers collected 118 questionnaires, out of which 78 questionnaires were used for the analysis. Reasons for the elimination of these questionnaires from the analysis included partially incomplete answers.



higher than other items, while those who answered 'three to four years' were the lowest.

According to the demographic profiles, the age group of the respondents was between the 30s and 50s and many of them who participated in the IME 2014 were managers or staff. Although 40% of the respondents were staff members, the duration of service in the convention industry was highly variable.

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents (N=78)

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	23	29
Male	55	71
<b>Age</b>		
20s	9	12
30s	22	28
40s	22	28
50s	22	28
60s and over	3	4
<b>Workplace</b>		
Hokkaido & Tohoku	14	18
Kanto & Koshinetsu	11	14
Chubu and Hokurikku	25	32
Kinki	0	0
Chugoku & Shikoku	18	23
Kyushu & Okinawa	10	13
<b>Job position in convention bureau</b>		
Executive officer	2	3
Manager	29	37
Assistant manager	11	14
Staff	32	41
Other	4	5
<b>Duration of service in convention industry</b>		
Less than one year	16	21
One to two years	21	27
Three to four years	10	13
five to nine years	18	23
More than ten years	13	17

Table 2 presents the duration of the service in the convention industry by each age group.



was 'Q16 universal design for people with disability' and the third highest value was 'availability of day care center for kids'.

Concerning "convention service", all three items were lower than the mean score of 3.00. 'Q19 a variety of multilingual sign in convention center', 'Q20 availability of Wi-Fi', and 'Q21 availability of free space' received a mean score of 2.76, 2.99, and 2.86 respectively.

Table 3. Measurement of the respondents' evaluation

Question items		Mean	SD
<b>Domain 1: Area information</b>			
1	Variety of local information on the Web	2.68	1.000
2	Variety of hotel information on the Web	2.56	0.906
<b>Domain 2: Transportation system</b>			
3	Number of direct flights from abroad	2.30	1.070
4	Convenient transportation system from airport	2.92	1.114
5	Reasonable transportation fares from airport	3.13	1.144
6	Easy access to host cities	3.09	1.240
7	Reasonable local transportation fares	3.22	1.002
<b>Domain 3: Local service</b>			
8	Level of local Professional Congress Organizer (PCO)	2.54	1.235
9	Level of local catering service	3.00	0.912
<b>Domain 4: Local area</b>			
10	A variety of multilingual signs	2.55	0.989
11	Safety and security of the destination & venue	4.44	0.731
12	Friendly attitudes of residents for visitors	2.97	0.967
<b>Domain 5: Conditions of site</b>			
13	Easy access from airport to convention center	3.12	1.081
14	Easy access from convention center to downtown	3.58	1.087
15	Sufficient number of accommodation nearby convention center	3.22	1.065
<b>Domain 6: Convention facilities</b>			
16	Universal design for people with disability	2.94	0.873
17	Availability of day care center for kids	2.44	0.815
18	Cleanliness of venue's restroom	3.62	0.970
<b>Domain 7: Convention service</b>			
19	A variety of multilingual sign in convention center	2.76	0.983
20	Availability of Wi-Fi	2.99	1.111
21	Availability of free space	2.86	0.893





two years of work experience had more positive opinions than the respondents with more than three years of work experience. The P value was 0.039, showing a significant difference in the opinion of both groups. On the other hand, regarding 'Q18 cleanliness of venue's restroom', the respondents with more than three years of work experience had more positive opinions than the respondents with less than two years of work experience. In Q18, the P value was 0.001, showing a significant difference in the opinion of both groups.

There were no significant differences of the respondents' opinions on the other 17 items in both groups, indicating similarities in their opinions.

## 5 Discussion

The findings here indicate that 'Q11 safety and security of the destination & venue' showed an exclusively high mean score. Generally speaking, Japan is seen to be a safe country so it is not just limited to specific locations and convention centers.

Convention bureaus evaluate some items below the mean score of 3.0, so it is still necessary to take sufficient measures against area information such as variety of hotel information on the web, local service such as level of local professional congress organizer (PCO), local area such as a variety of multilingual sign, convention facilities such as available of day care center for kids and introduce free Wi-Fi in each major region where tourists visit. Moreover, tourist maps or guidelines written in multiple languages should be provided for the tourists.

In the multivariate regression, the respondents with less than two years of work experience had more positive opinions than those with more than three years of work experience. Particularly in some aspects such as: 'reasonable local transportation fares', 'level of local catering service' and 'universal design for people with disability'.

The respondents with less than two years of work experience may believe that their region and convention centers are superior to other regions and convention centers. On the other hand, it seems that the respondents with more than three years of work experience do not believe that there are remarkable parts in their region and convention centers in particular, compared to other regions and convention centers.

Regarding 'cleanliness of venue's restroom' there was only one significant difference that the respondents with more than three years of work experience had a positive opinion than those with less than two years of work experience. There is a possibility that the respondents with more than three years of work experience had positive opinions about the cleanliness of the venue's restroom because they may believe that it is important to enhance the clean image of not only the convention center, but also their areas.

The result showed that the longer the duration of service in the convention industry, the more familiar the respondents are with other regions and convention centers. This is most likely because the respondents who have worked in the convention industry for many years are less likely to overestimate their regions and convention centers. Therefore, it is important for the convention bureaus to share the information amongst each other and have an opportunity to reconsider the most remarkable things in their regions and convention centers.

It is important to acknowledge that this study has some limitations. In order to secure the valid responses, researchers had to eliminate the invalid responses despite the fact that 118 questionnaires were collected. Moreover, this study divided respondents into two groups; respondents with less than two years of work experience and more than three years of work experience, but it is difficult to observe the borderline that respondents change their opinions though there are some significant differences in the two groups. Therefore, it is still unclear whether the duration of service affects the evaluation, which emphasizes the necessity to continue with a

further study to analyze the differences in future research.

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