(The Role of MICE Tourism's Demand on Hotel Occupancy in Jordan)

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to identify the role of MICE tourism's demand on hotel occupancy rate in Jordan. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher developed a questionnaire consisting of (13) items distributed on two main axes, which included the independent variable MICE tourism demand (and it included 4 sub-axes, (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions). The dependent variable is hotel occupancy rate. The study population consisted of all those arrivals to Jordanian hotels in Amman, while the study sample consisted of a simple random sample that included 384 respondents, where (70) questionnaires were distributed after being judged by specialists for the purposes of the exploratory (pilot) study. The researcher followed the descriptive approach in presenting the study data, and the analytical approach in analyzing the data of the final study, which 331 valid questionnaires. The study concluded that there is a positive and statistically significant effect of MICE tourism on the hotel occupancy rate. The results show through regression analysis that there is indeed an effect of MICE tourism demand on hotel occupancy rate, and this effect is of a positive nature. Thus, this study provides well-suggested recommendations for those interested in the tourism and hospitality sector. The study recommended the necessity of both official bodies and authorities (the government) as well as the private sector must formulate innovative strategies to attract tourism, in particular MICE events for their impact on increasing the number of visitors into the Jordan.

Keywords: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions, Tourism Demand, Hotel Occupancy, Jordan.

ملخص البحث:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد دور طلب سياحة المعارض والمؤتمرات والمعارض على معدل إشغال الفنادق في الأردن. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة طور الباحث استبانه مكونة من (13) فقرة موزعة على محورين رئيسيين تضمن الطلب المستقل و المتغير(وشمل 4 محاور فرعية (اجتماعات ، حوافز ، مؤتمرات ومعارض). المتغير التابع هو معدل الإشغال الفندقي. وتألف مجتمع الدراسة من جميع الوافدين إلى الفنادق الأردنية في عمان ، بينما تكونت عينة الدراسة من عينة عشوائية بسيطة ضمت 384 مبحوثاً ، حيث وزعت (70) استبانه بعد الحكم عليها من قبل متخصصون لأغراض الدراسة الاستكشافية (التجريبية) ، وقد اتبع الباحث المنهج الوصفي في عرض بيانات الدراسة ، والمنهج التحليلي في تحليل بيانات الدراسة النهائية ، والتي بلغت 331 استبانه صحيحة ، ولخصت الدراسة إلى أن هناك إيجابيات وتأثيرات سياحة للاجتماعات و والحوافز و المؤتمرات والمعارض ذات الدلالة الإحصائية على معدل إشغال الفنادق ، وتظهر النتائج من خلال تحليل الانحدار أن هناك بالفعل تأثير الطلب على السياحة في الاجتماعات و المعارض والمؤتمرات والحوافز على معدل إشغال الفنادق ، وهذا التأثير ذو طبيعة إيجابية. وبالتالي ، تقدم هذه الدراسة توصيات مقترحة جيدًا للمهتمين بقطاع السياحة والضيافة. أوصت الدراسة بضرورة قيام كل من الهيئات والسلطات الرسمية (الحكومية) وكذلك القطاع الخاص بصياغة استراتيجيات مبتكرة لجذب السياحة ومنها فعاليات الاجتماعات و الحوافز و المؤتمرات والمعارض لتأثيرها على زيادة عدد الزوار إلى الأردن.

1. Introduction

Tourism in Jordan is one of the most important economic sectors, and Jordan is considered one of the most important tourist attractions in the Middle East. This is mainly due to its religious and historical importance. Jordan has other characteristics that make it a destination for tourists and visitors from all over the world throughout the year, especially with regard to MICE tourism. Jordan also enjoys a diversity of terrain, and Jordan is considered a link between Asia, Africa and Europe. Jordan is also characterized by the diversity of tourist places and attractions, such as archaeological, religious, therapeutic, cultural and recreational sites (Al-Qaid & Hassan, 2010).

2. Problem statement

Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, (2000), the establishment of tourism events meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions, can turn play a great role in attracting businessmen. In a study conducted by Sainaghi, Ruggero (2019), on the Milan 2015 exhibition on hotel performance, it was found that the exhibition increased the revenues of available rooms, resulting from the increase in hotels occupancy rate, this indicates the event's ability to change. According to Chloe lau (2016), the hotel sector is the primary beneficiary of the MICE events, as attendees spend more than 65% of their money in hotels, while they spend 15% on food inside and outside the hotel, and 10% on shopping, and 10% on different transportation. According to Al Tareri (2016), meetings, conferences and exhibitions sector is related to all aspects of tourism, such as infrastructure, accommodation, transportation, attractions, food, drink, and entertainment, as they are all linked together.

Al Tareri (2016), aims to develop the current knowledge of MICE as one of the most important sectors in the tourism market, which is of a significance to the economy of many countries around the world, due to the development of various means of transportation and the increase in disposable income, and increase in the numbers of international convention and meetings increased. As a result of the growth of

multinational companies all over the world, the number of associations that rely on annual meetings to conduct their business has increased, there was also in an increase in economic knowledge, therefore, exchanging knowledge and experiences between countries.

3. Study Objectives

Examine the impact of MICE Tourism demand on Hotel occupancy in Jordan

4. Literature Review

4.1 MICE

According to Chloe Lau (2016), Dhamija (2013), Alananzeh (2012), Jamgade & Sweety (2018), MICE are events and activities in which the attendees participate in a specific place where they are arranged and coordinated in advance, in which services, facilities, appropriate space, amenities and entertainment are provided to meet the needs of the participants. They include business events, in fact they are businessmen more than tourists, who need food, beverages, accommodation, luxury, recreation and high-quality services. According to Al Tareri (2016), meetings, conferences and exhibitions sector is related to all aspects of tourism, such as infrastructure, accommodation, transportation, attractions, food, drink, and entertainment, as they are all linked together. Connell et al (2015), reflect on the significance of events in the tourism industry. The study concluded that 73.1% strongly believe that events like MICE events are the key role player towards tourist attraction and an important off-peak strategy; that there is a significant positive relationship between the numbers of tourists and events, as areas with less than 10,000 visitors are inclined to use event strategies to attract more visitors.

4.1.1 The Meaning of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions

M = Meetings (Corporate).

I = Incentives.

C = Conventions.

E = Exhibitions.

1: Meetings

The gathering of people in a specific place in order to share information, discuss topics and find solutions. The number of attendees ranging from ten people to ten thousand people, where all services are provided, including food and drink and other, depending on the type of meeting. Jamgadg & Sweety (2018), Kaminski (2014).

2: Incentives

It is to motivate traders, distributors, production workers, and other employees who achieved their desired goal and grant them tourist trips including accommodation in hotels trips as a reward to their hard work, that includes providing them with accommodation, food, drink, and entertainment games (Jamgade & Sweety 2018, Chloe Lau 2016).

3: Conventions

Chloe Lau (2016), Alananzeh (2012), Jamgade & Sweety (2018), shed more light into conventions, that people participate in educational courses, workshop, training, meetings, agreements, and social networking. Conventions and conferences are sometime similar in purpose; exchanging ideas and information about common interests between the participated groups, which are organized annually, where participants have to pay certain fee in order to be part of conventions.

4: Exhibitions

It is collection of things combined and shown in one place, rather, its human and institutional activities created for specific reasons, a form of trade; means of marketing in exporting countries. Exhibitions are organized to show new products, services and information, where an area or place is rented for companies to show their products and/or services and meet potential buyers. A good example of exhibitions is CANTON exhibition, one of the most important exhibitions in the world, that is held twice a year in spring and autumn, and it is the largest exhibition in China, where it provides all sorts of goods, which is of great importance, as the number of attendances was 200 thousand in 2005, and exports amounted to $2923 billion, Chloe Lau (2016), JörgBeier & Beier & Damböck (2006), Jamgade, Sweety (2018).

4.2 Tourism Demand

According to Rosselló & Sansó (2017); Song & Witt (2012), tourism sector is one of the determinants of incomes to many countries, estimating the expected tourism demand constitutes a very sufficient aspect in planning activities, making anticipated demand a necessity for effective planning. While the request mainly in the form of visits or trips, including holidays, visiting friends and relatives, and conferences, the majority of people however travel to tourist destinations to spend their vacation (pleasure), which determines the proper demand enabling specialists in the industry to plan. For Uysal (1998), Song & Witt (2012), the demand tourism can be measured in terms of: number of visits from the country of origin to the country of destinationor, in terms of tourism expenditure, and/or in terms of the number of nights booked for the stay in hotels. USAID (2012), Dhamija (2013), Song & Witt (2012), Agree that tourism demand is the corner piece for all the decisions regarding tourism, therefore, the success of many organizations and businesses relies mainly on the status of tourism demand.

4.3 Hotel Occupancy

According to Abed al- karem (2013), hotel occupancy rate is considered to be one of the most important criterionin determining the efficiency in which the work in the hotel sector is being performed, and the most important criterion in determining the hotel demand. It is acentral indicator towards hotel revenues over a given period of time, the rate of occupancy can beunderlined as: the rate of the number of rooms booked during a specific period of time. Al-Saleem, et al (2013), show that the occupancy rates in Jordan declinedin 2011 in the Dead Sea hotels; the occupancy rate reached 42% compared to 2012, which was 55% during the same month in the next year, while the rate in Amman based hotels reached 49%. This decline they suggest, is a result to various reasons, the most important of which was the expensiveoperating cost, which consequently leads to low competitiveness with neighboring countries in the territory. Furthermore, the scarcity in the numbers of foreign tourists coming from Europe and North American is due to several reasons, mainly the political and the economic status quo of the region. There are many challenges facing the tourism sector in Jordan, the most important is the high cost of

accommodations compared to neighboring countries (Egypt, Syria, etc.). They recommend the Jordanian authorities to make serious efforts in an attempt to raise the GDP from 13% up to 17% by 2020, adding that Jordan's revenues from tourism.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Study Site

The data in this research were collected in Jordan, a country in the Middle East bordered by Syria (north), Iraq (east), Palestine (west) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (south), Jordan is home to many cultural, religious and historical tourism sites. According to the official website of the Jordanian Tourism Board & Al-Ananzeh (2012), Jordan has many arenas designated to host exhibitions, conferences and exhibition events in many cities including: Amman, Petra, Aqaba and the Dead Sea. Some of the most significant places and arenas are: Zara Expo Amman, the Royal Cultural Center, the Royal Conference Center, the Arena, the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center, and Conference Hotels.

5.2 Research Design

This study is designed as a quantitative study. For this study, a descriptive research design was used. Descriptive research can be a continuation of, or a precursor to, exploratory research or, more commonly, explanatory research **Kante, Chepken, & Oboko, (2018**). A descriptive study can be conducted on a larger scale than an exploratory study. Descriptive research, according to Kumar, Talib, and Ramayah (2013), describes something that could be a phenomenon, a current situation, or the characteristics of a group, organization, people, and others. Because this is a descriptive study, quantitative data was gathered. Any data collection technique, such as a questionnaire, is referred to as quantitative (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Researchers were able to collect quantitative data using the survey strategy, which they were able to analyze using descriptive and inferential statistics. As a result, primary data was used in this study.

The data for this study was collected at a single point in time, so data is collected only once to allow the researcher to respond to the research questions (Kumar, Talib & Ramayah, 2013). The majority of the time, it is based on a questionnaire survey (Sedgwick, 2014). The survey method was used to collect information from the sample. However, a formal list of questionnaires was prepared prior to the survey. Respondents in this study were tourists visiting Jordan. The respondents were questioned about MICE tourism demand and hotel occupancy rate in Jordan. The survey method, according to Sekaran (2003), is both inexpensive and effective for gathering information from the targeted population.

5.3 Determination of the Sample Size

The sample is a subset or subgroup of the population, and by studying the sample, the researcher should draw the conclusion that is general sizable to the population of interest. According to Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, (2013), sample size determination is the act of selecting or choosing the number of replicates or observation to include in a statistical sample. However, in order to obtain accurate data for the study, the researcher distributed approximately 400 questionnaires through simple random sampling methods normally used to guarantee representation from the total population.

Population	Sample size
10000	370
15000	375
20000	377
30000	379
40000	380
50000	381
100000	383
>100000	**384**

Source: Sekaran (2016)

According to Sekaran, (2016) who revealed that the sample size for any population with up to one million at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error should be three hundred and eighty-four as shown in the above table. Based on this fact, the total sample size for this study is three hundred and eighty-four (384) since the total population is one million, five hundred and forty-eight thousand, nine hundred and eight (1,548,908).

5.4 Measure and Sampling

A structured questionnaire has been used in this study, for collecting data; a self-administered questionnaire was used in conducting this study. The questionnaires were divided into categories that suit the purpose/s and the nature of this study, the questionnaire is structured into two sections, section One (A), captured the information about MICE tourism, section Two (B) captured the information about hotel occupancy rate. The sections (A) and (B) used a five (5) point Likert scale ranging from 5 = strongly agree, 4 agree 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree. The questionnaire presented in two languages (English and Arabic) for convenience, questionnaires have been minimized according to items of each variable and sources of the items.

5.6 Data Collection and Research Instrument

A comprehensive review of previous studies in relevant fields was conducted in order to identify the tools required for the questionnaire. In order to assess the relationship between MICE tourism demand and hotel occupancy rate in Jordan, several variables from the previous research were used and appropriate questionnaires were developed. As a result, items for each dimension have been adapted from previous researchers such as Jeffrey et al (2002), Kavunkil & Haneef (2017), Kaminski (2014), Alananzeh (2012), Barhoum et al (2013), Chen (2010), Kim (2002), , with some changes in terms of wording and content that are appropriate for the research objectives and are easy to answer by respondents. The developed questionnaires were submitted to a reasonable number of university professors in both Jordanian and Saudi Universities for approval.

5.7 Research Findings

5.1 Reliability

The collected data were systemically analyzed for examining the internal consistency of the questionnaire, in which the value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Reliable questionnaires have Cronbach alpha values of 0.7 and above (Dawson & Trapp, 2001). Table 1 provides a summary of the reliability results.

Table 1. Reliability Results.

Instruments	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
MICE	7	90.1%
Hotel Occupancy Rate	6	84.3%

Looking at the values of the Cronbach Alpha, it is apparent that all values were at the degree of stability, whereas the values of the Cronbach alpha transactions are more than 70%.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

For the purpose of showing the respondents opinions in the questionnaire, the descriptive analysis was used to examine mean and standard deviation. Table 2. shows the result of descriptive statistics.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Paragraphs	Mean	Std. Deviation
Jordan is promoted as a MICE tourism destination in the region.	3.62	1.041
Jordan has sufficient facilities to cater for MICE tourism.	3.71	1.044
Jordan has sufficient facilities to cater for MICE tourism.	3.83	1.002
MICE event has the potential to generate tourism demand in this country.	3.83	1.048
MICE event is able to increase visitation during low tourist season.	3.85	0.999
MICE event appeals to high spending visitors.	3.75	1.018
MICE tourism appeals to high visitors.	3.62	1.045
MICE	3.745	0.81433
It is likely that I stay in a hotel during MICE tourism event.	3.73	1.003
I expect to stay in the same hotel during future MICE tourism event.	3.65	1.005
I would like to recommend this hotel that I stay to my friends and relatives.	3.67	1.058

It is very important for me to stay in a hotel that organizes a MICE tourism event than other accommodation premises.	3.72	1.063
I prefer to stay in hotel during a high peak visitation.	3.54	1.134
I prefer to stay in hotel during a low peak visitation.	3.24	1.208
Hotel Occupancy Rate	3.5905	0.80829

Table (2) illustrates that the answers for the MICE ranged between (3.62- 3.85) regarding the mean, the dimension of MICE as a whole takes the degree of approval agree with mean value of 3.74. On the other hand, the answers for hotel occupancy rate ranged between (3.24- 3.73), the dimension of hotel occupancy rates as a whole takes the degree of approval N/A with mean value of 3.59.

5.3 Test of Research Hypothesis

To test the study hypothesis which assumes a statistically significant relationship between MICE and hotel occupancy rate, the regression analysis was used as illustrated in table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta	Std. error	T	Sig
Constant.	1.222	0.162	7.557	0.000
MICE	0.632	0.042	14.989	0.000
R	0.637			
R2	0.406			
Adj. R2	0.404			
F	224.660			
Sig	0.000			

The regression analysis illustrates that MICE tourism demand explains 40.6% of change in hotel occupancy rate, as more MICE have a statistically and positively significant effect on hotel occupancy rate were t= 14.989 and sig.= 0.000.

6. Discussion of Findings

Cholelau (2013), suggests that MICE eventsare associated with tourism and hospitality/hotels sector, where (MICE) is defined as meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions, and it lies in the travelers who attend these activities in the sense that the purpose goes beyond entertainment or pleasure, rather in fact they are business travelers, hence, the purpose of their travel is purely business oriented and therefore the need to many services and facilities dedicated to their purpose of visit, the most important of which are: catering, entertainment, and accommodation, and therefore there exists a relationship between the variables, which is of a positive relationship the greater the establishment of the (MICE) activities the greater the hotel occupancy rate.

The results from Sainaghi, et al (2019), confirm that there is a clear impact of suchbig events in all seasons of the year, especially in its weak season (stagnation), suggesting an increase in room revenue available due to the high occupancy rate in hotels. According to their study, the hypothesis indicates that exhibitionshave the ability to influence the performance of hotels all the year round, where the period from May 1st to October the 31th-2015 during the of holding exhibitions, an increase in the ratio of all measures during the events, especially the rate of hotel occupancy. The assumption is that events fully improve the performance of hotels and increase the occupancy rate, where the rate of occupancy of

hotels is gradually increasing during the period of events. Michel Nazzal (2014), suggests that the most noticeable characteristic of business tourism, is the fact that it is not affected by the political and/or tourism climate, frequented businessmen spend longer stays in highly rated hotels. According to Dew et al. (2004), among the countries in the Middle East, Jordan is promptlyevolving as a new destination for MICE events offering MICE guests an exceptional and a unique experience that will definitely bring them back on an extended family holiday.

7. Conclusion

MICE tourism in Jordan is considered to be a major type of sectors in the industry (tourism industry), hence, Jordanian authorities in the relevant fields are marketing Jordan globally to be a host of MICE functions. Taking into considerations that most of MICE tourists/visitors/participants are businessmen/women that demand high-quality services, luxurious accommodations and recreational facilities. This type of tourism (MICE) is nevertheless not affected by economic, climatic and/or political factors, furthermore, MICE events are key strategy to escalate the numbers of tourists/visitors in the times of tourism stagnation. Countries have systematically structured programs to encourage the tourism movement and fashioned tourism demand in the times of tourism stagnation, this has been in the form of establishing and hosting events that include (but not limited) festivals, exhibitions, events, seminars and meetings. Based on the results of this paper, it is apparent that there is a statistically significant relationship between MICE events and hotel occupancy rate/s in Jordan. The more MICE events are held and hosted, the highest the occupancy rates. MICE tourism demand explains 40.6% of change in hotel occupancy rate, as more MICE have a statistically and positively significant effect on hotel occupancy.

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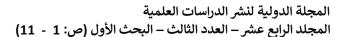impacts of events and conventions. Event management, 6(3), 191-204.

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