

Strategies for Conventions Bidding in a Competitive Environment: An Analysis of Success Factors by Japanese MICE Stakeholders

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Abstract

This study identifies key factors that Japanese MICE stakeholders believe to contribute to successful bids for conventions in competitive environments. MICE has a large economic ripple effect on the local economy. However, there are few in-depth case studies of successful convention bids in Japan. An analysis of a questionnaire survey of 220 stakeholders from two IME events identified five factors: (1) the amount of information available in English, (2) cooperative stakeholder structures, (3) hotel brand recognition, (4) use of convention facilities, and (5) cultural and tourism resources. These findings emphasize the importance of infrastructure, stakeholders' collaboration, and cultural appeal. The study is limited by its small sample size and the need for more research.

Keywords: MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions), Stakeholder cooperation, Convention facilities, Economic impact, Cultural and tourism resources

1 Introduction

This study aims to identify the factors that Japanese MICE stakeholders believe to contribute to successful bids for conventions in the presence of competing cities. MICE stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (or sometimes Events). Several sets of statistical data make it undeniable that hosting conventions has an enormous impact on local economies. For example, according to statistics from the Japan Tourism Agency [1] in 2018, total MICE-related expenditures are estimated to be approximately 538.4 billion yen. The economic ripple effect of total MICE-related expenditures is close to 1.59 trillion yen. Furthermore, it is estimated that holding MICE events has created jobs for about 96,000 people nationwide and generated tax revenues of roughly 82 billion yen. According to the latest JNTO statistics, the number of international conferences held in Japan in 2024 increased to 1,702, representing a 1.2-fold rise compared to the previous year. Notably, in-person conferences grew markedly to 1,184 events (1.6 times the previous year), whereas the number of hybrid conferences declined to 518, approximately 80% of the previous year's level. As a result, the proportion of conferences held fully in person expanded further compared to the previous year [2].

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In light of recent recovery, conventions are an important factor for regional economic development because they provide opportunities for local economies to grow and thrive. As cities in Japan are confronted with challenges associated with declining populations and an aging demographic, it is hoped that MICE will become an important new growth engine for many of these cities. Within the Asia-Oceania Region, both Tokyo and Kyoto rank consistently in the top 10 for the total number of conventions held by a city, while other major cities such as Nagoya, Yokohama, and Fukuoka rank consistently in the top 20. Strengthening efforts to attract conventions to regional cities will ultimately contribute to the growth of convention activity throughout Japan. Despite the recent attention being paid to the economic ripple effects of hosting such conventions, academic research on the factors that lead to successful convention attraction remains limited in Japan.

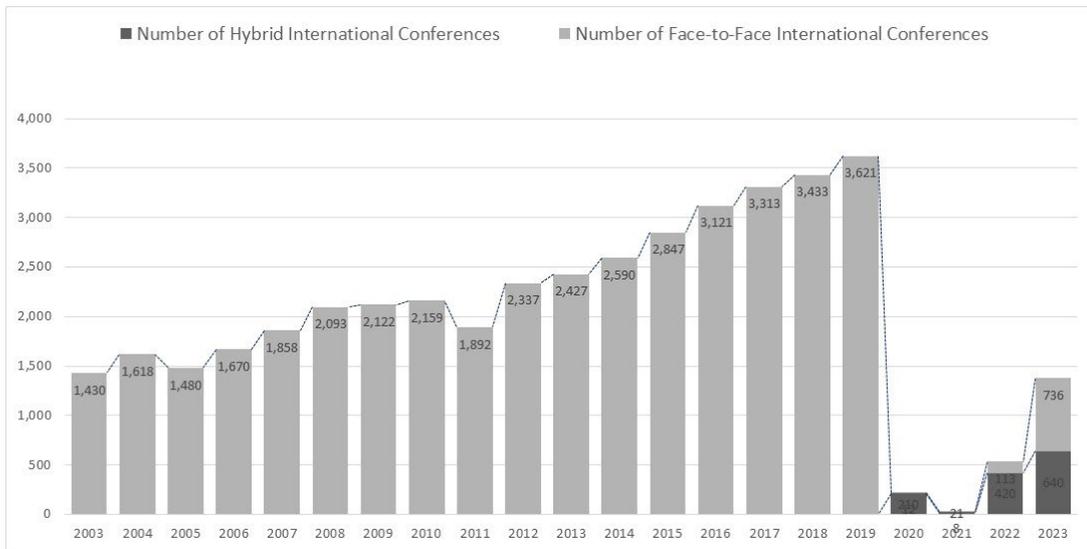


Figure 1: Number of Conventions held in Japan (1999 to 2023)

Source: Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) [2]

In 2023, the Japanese government has formulated a new Basic Plan for Promoting Japan as a Tourism-Oriented Nation. This initiative aims not only to foster inbound tourism; it also seeks to entice visitors who wish to attend or host conventions. Japan is preparing to become the number one country in conventions held within Asia and is implementing a variety of measures toward that end. Particular attention is also paid to MICE, which makes a massive contribution to local economies.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify how to improve bidding efficiency for MICE attraction, in order to create a positive ripple effect through not just the local economy, but across the Japanese economy. For example, under the government's "Tourism-Oriented Nation" policy, the impact of MICE tourism revenue on Japan's GDP is being considered. At the regional level, MICE attraction affects various industries such as hospitality, food and beverage and transportation. By identifying the success factors of MICE attraction, this study can be a valuable contribution to the local economy revitalization.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces literature. Section 3 explains our methodology. Analysis results are summarized in Section 4. Considerations of the results are provided in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes this paper.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Destination and Facility-related Factors in Convention Bidding

Research conducted outside Japan has long examined how destination-related characteristics influence the success of convention bidding. A central theme in this body of literature is that the physical and functional attributes of host cities shape the decision-making processes of meeting planners (hereafter referred to as planners).

In investigating how planners assess cities within the United States, Baloglu and Love [3] demonstrated that destination image, formed through both cognitive (intellectual assessment) and affective (emotional) evaluations, is a significant factor in the decision process when selecting sites for convention events. The findings indicated that planners consider not just marketing aspects when determining the strengths and weaknesses of a particular city; the information gathered through their assessments will also drive an overall positioning strategy used to bid on future events against competing destinations. Crouch, and Louviere [4] and Crouch et al. [5] also demonstrated that there are three main attributes, accessibility, venue quality, and overall destination attractiveness, which all strongly affect where planners decide to hold their conventions. In their research, they utilized choice modeling methodologies to demonstrate that cities with modern infrastructure and strong promotional capabilities are the most likely to host conventions when competing against other destinations. Additionally, Jo et al. [6] emphasized that to be competitive in bids, candidate destinations need not only to focus their investment in physical (facilities and accessibility) but also to consider many different types of resources that are not physical (experience, reputation, reliability, career potential, and local support).

From the perspective of convention attendance outcomes, Rittichainuwat et al. [7]'s study provided insight into the factors that facilitate participation at conventions. Specifically, most attendees' motivations were for personal growth and development as well as recreational activities and business ventures. Some of the facilitators to conference participation are inexpensive airfare, the opportunity to set aside time to attend, a spouse or family member's support/willingness, and being able to travel easily.

2.2 Stakeholder Cooperation and Governance Structures

In addition to the physical infrastructure that may be offered, the second group of researchers investigating convention bidding focused on how different stakeholders collaborate and govern their activities within that context. The authors of these studies agree that winning bids for conventions is typically not something that one single stakeholder can accomplish but rather requires the coordinated efforts of many stakeholders to be successful. Andersson and Getz [8], for example, studied the festival sector and concluded that collaboration, resource interdependence and institutionalized relationships are vital to the long-term sustainability of events. In the same way, collaboration among Convention Bureaus, local governments and service providers is necessary for the success of many convention bids. Comas and Moscardo's work [9] illustrated the importance of providing coordinated decision-making processes, particularly with regard to the planning process for committees. The collective collaboration of the participants will improve the quality of the bids they prepare. In addition to this, Upchurch et al. [10] stated that the finding indicates that planners primarily value using and providing good-quality venues for meetings; this is followed by the availability of food and beverage offerings, as well as a good overall brand image. Safety, the quality of service offered at the location, the attractiveness of the location, and

access to the location were relatively equal in importance. Wu and Weber [11] conducted empirical research indicating that in the Asia-Pacific Region, the level of competitiveness of a convention center is principally influenced by the way the convention facility satisfies the needs of attendees in relation to functionality, comfort, and quality of service rather than the overall design of the venue itself. At a more regional level, Kim et al. [12] analyzed competition among East Asian convention cities and concluded that branding reputation, marketing efforts, and governmental commitment are the primary sources of competitive advantage. Mistilis and Dwyer [13] highlighted the importance of government support and integrated marketing strategies in maintaining competitiveness.

2.3 Cultural Resources, Destination Image, and Competitiveness

The third line of inquiry approaches questions about the attractiveness of a convention's destination through an examination of the cultural resources and the destination image. Shin [14] pointed out that a multi-faceted approach was necessary, including improvements to transportation and accommodations; developing tourism products that are related to nearby attractions; developing enhanced city tours; and creating an overall tourism information database.

Oppermann [15] stressed that the process of decision-making of selecting a convention destination is complex where image, amenities, and quality of service play an important role in planners' and participants' perceptions and choices. Also, Oppermann and Chon [16] proposed two conceptual models of association convention tourism: one creating to show how associations, potential attendees, and host destinations interact with one another and another illustrating how an individual makes a decision to attend an event and highlighted the lack of a comprehensive analysis of their relative influence and called for further research into the decision-making processes of all key actors involved. Dwyer and Kim [17] point out the importance that accumulating empirical research that takes into account differences in tourists' motivations and preferences will help clarify the relationship between destination attributes and consumer preferences.

In a study of the UK & Australia, Weber and Ladkin [18] evaluated what outside environmental elements have the biggest effects on the convention industry through the Delphi method. Their findings suggest that there is a strong consensus across the two countries about what constitutes important infrastructure development, human resources investment, technological enhancement, marketing improvement & government support. However, Weber & Ladkin also noted that few empirical studies on these same elements from a MICE stakeholder viewpoint exist for any given country or region. Finally, Iwamoto, Matsuo, and Hirokawa [19] performed a questionnaire survey about practical knowledge for bringing in international conventions in Japan. Their findings indicated the importance of Convention Bureaus, inter-organizational collaboration, and nations with competitive facilities, providing valuable insights into Japan-specific settings.

Despite the accumulation of MICE-related studies, much of the existing literature is grounded in cases outside Japan. As a result, relatively little attention has been given to how Japanese MICE stakeholders themselves evaluate success factors in competitive bidding situations.

This study addresses this gap by examining the perceptions of Japanese convention organizers, thereby contributing to a more context-sensitive understanding of convention bidding strategies.

3 Method

3.1 Data Collection

To clarify the purpose of this study, a questionnaire survey was conducted targeting MICE stakeholders. This survey was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to MICE stakeholders at the Japan MICE EXPO (IME) events held in 2015 and 2016. IME is the largest domestic business event in Japan for attracting and hosting MICE, co-organized by Japan Congress Convention Bureau (JCCB) and Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO). Organizations and companies involved in attracting and hosting MICE, such as conventions, academic meetings, corporate meetings, and incentive tours to Japan, conventions exhibit from all over the country. For those who plan and host MICE events, it is an excellent opportunity to obtain valuable information and consult concretely in a one-stop manner regarding potential locations and hosting events. The 2015 IME was held at the Tokyo Forum for two days on December 9 and 10, while the 2016 IME was convened at Pacifico Yokohama for two days on December 6 and 7. The field survey conducted at the 2015 and 2016 IME events collected responses from 220 participants.

Although the data used in this study is outdated, the MICE industry, which had stagnated temporarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is beginning to return to pre-pandemic levels. During the Covid-19 pandemic, IME was held online instead of face-to-face. IME is one of the largest events where MICE stakeholders from across Japan gather, it was not possible to conduct a survey during the pandemic, and therefore recent data could not be collected. However, Iwamoto and Matsuo have shown that there is no significant difference in the expectations of participants regarding tourism resources before and after Covid-19 [20]. Therefore, this study utilizes the survey results from 2015 and 2016.

3.2 Data Analysis

The questionnaire survey in this study is divided into two sections. The first section consists of questions regarding the demographic information of the respondents. This includes gender, age, educational background, area of expertise, and place of origin. In the next part, respondents are asked to rate the importance of various factors that contribute to successful bidding activities when there are competing cities. The factors for successful bidding consist of 19 questions, mainly extracted from previous studies. These questionnaire items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (less important) to 5 (most important).

The items in the questionnaire mainly include the following aspects: the hospitality industry (hotels and restaurants), international conference venues, collaboration with related organizations, the abundance of tourist attractions at the host location, and the adoption of foreign languages.

For the 19 questions, two types of analysis methods will be used: descriptive statistics and factor analysis. The purpose of descriptive statistics is to understand which items are considered most important. The reason for conducting factor analysis in this study is to identify the underlying structure of the data and to explain the correlations between variables.

The purpose of using factor analysis was for the researcher to reduce the complexity of the data by providing greater meaningful insights. In conducting the factor analysis, the researcher established how many factors were appropriate by applying various standard approaches. First, all factors having an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 were retained because each factor has, at minimum, equivalent explanatory power to an observed variable. Second, the scree plot of eigenvalues was reviewed to discern the point where a gradual decline in eigenvalues indicated that the

number of factors was correct, as shown in Figure 2. Finally, the researcher used a cumulative contribution ratio to verify that the factors derived accounted for an adequate percentage of the overall variance.

Through this process, the researcher found five factors to be appropriate and will continue with the five factors for analysis.

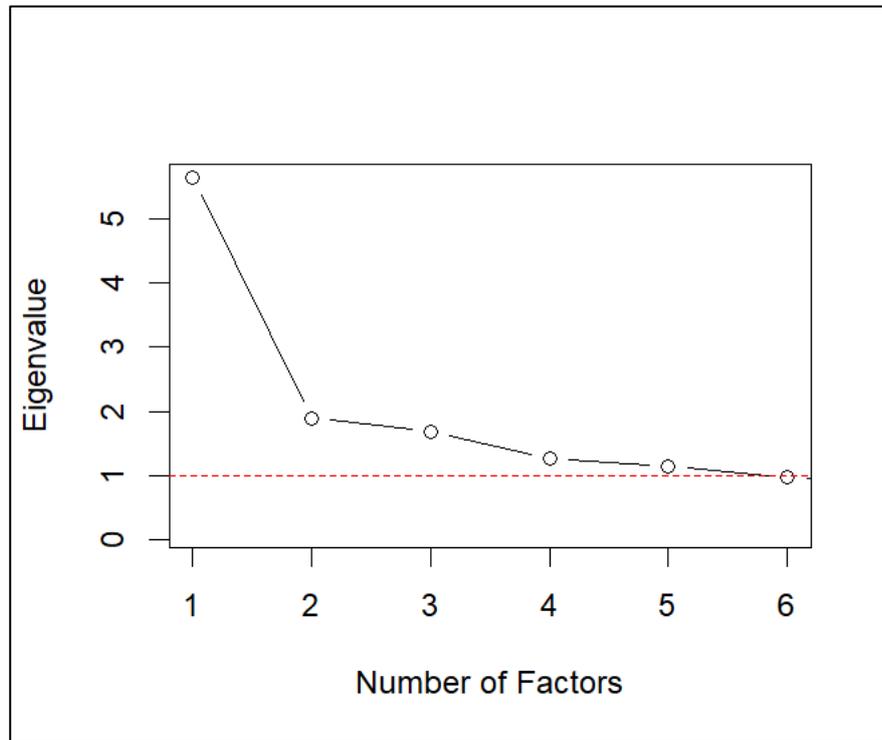


Figure 2: Scree plot of Eigenvalue

4 Results

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Overall, the sample is characterized by a predominance of male, mid-career professionals with a high level of educational attainment. In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents held advanced degrees, particularly at the master's level, suggesting a highly educated and specialized cohort. Respondents represented a wide range of professional specialties, with relatively strong representation in law and economics, reflecting an emphasis on policy- and governance-related perspectives within the sample. Geographically, respondents were distributed across multiple regions of Japan, with a notable presence outside major metropolitan areas.

This regional diversity suggests that the survey captured viewpoints not only from large urban centers but also from regional contexts where MICE development and economic conditions may differ.

Table 1: Outline of the Characteristics of Respondents

(a) Gender			(b) Age			(c) Education		
	Freq. (n)	Per. (%)		Freq. (n)	Per. (%)		Freq. (n)	Per. (%)
Female	57	26	20s	15	7	Junior college graduate	22	10
Male	147	67	30s	43	20	Vocational/specialized course graduate	6	3
Prefer not to say	16	7	40s	65	30	University graduate	15	7
			50s	52	24	Graduate school graduate (master's degree)	149	68
			60s	29	13	Graduate school graduate (doctorate)	10	5
			No answer	16	7	No answer	18	8

(d) Specialty						(e) Work location		
	Freq. (n)	Per. (%)		Freq. (n)	Per. (%)		Freq. (n)	Per. (%)
Literature	20	9	Language	18	8	Hokkaido and Tohoku	35	16
Science	3	1	Engineering	14	6	Kanto/Koshinetsu	27	12
Agriculture	5	2	Tourism	12	5	Chubu/Hokuriku	46	21
Sociology	18	8	Law	38	17	Kinki	18	8
Education	4	2	Politics	4	2	Chugoku and Shikoku	44	20
Economics	33	15	Other	19	9	Kyushu and Okinawa	34	15
Business Management	5	2	No answer	27	12	No answer	16	7

4.2 Measurement of Factors in Successfully Attracting Conventions

The survey responses provide a comprehensive assessment of the factors that contribute to successfully attracting conventions (Table 2). These factors are measured using a Likert Scale with a range of five (Very Important to Not Important). As basic statistics, both the Average (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) are provided for each question in order to depict the overall tendency of response to the question and the amount of variation in responses.

Table 2: Importance of Factors in Successfully Attracting Conventions.

	Questions	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Q1	Several 4-star and 5-star hotels in the area	3.90	1.01
Q2	Numerous foreign-owned hotels in the area	3.33	1.11
Q3	Several catering companies offering lunch and drinks in the area	3.98	0.84
Q4	Provision of vegetarian and halal meals at local hotels and restaurants	4.26	0.72
Q5	Low usage fees for convention facilities	4.18	0.81
Q6	Flexibility in reservations and usage of convention facilities	4.58	0.67
Q7	Inspection program covering travel expenses by the Bureau	3.82	0.78
Q8	Meetings between the mayor, deputy mayor, prefectural governor, and vice governor with key stakeholders	3.91	0.89
Q9	Sufficient subsidy and grant money to support events	4.41	0.71
Q10	System of cooperation between the convention bureau, city, and prefectural officials in attraction activities	4.50	0.74
Q11	System of cooperation between the convention bureau, facilities, and hotels in attraction activities	4.68	0.56
Q12	System of cooperation between the convention bureau and PCO in attraction activities	4.14	0.84
Q13	Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) staff	3.30	0.85
Q14	a unique culture that is attractive to international visitors	4.38	0.69
Q15	Abundance of tourist resources available for excursions	4.34	0.65
Q16	Extensive information about the area provided in English	4.38	0.67
Q17	Extensive information about the facilities provided in English	4.33	0.69
Q18	Extensive information about the hotel provided in English	4.34	0.69
Q19	PR material highlighting the environment and ecology of the host city	3.59	0.84

In general, the evaluations of the factors related to the inter-organizational cooperation and operation flexibility have received higher ratings than those of the other two categories. Specifically, most respondents rated cooperation and collaboration among local governments, convention facilities, Convention Bureaus, and hotels as being the most important component of bidding. Operational flexibility in using convention facilities was also rated higher than many of the other items, indicating that respondents appropriately value these types of operational flexibility in a competitive environment.

In addition, there were several items in the category that received slightly less positive evaluations compared to other items. For example, the presence of foreign hotels was not consistently viewed by respondents as being critical. Environmental and/or ecological marketing materials were also not consistently reported as important or requisite items. The difference in the evaluations of these factors indicates that the respondents were clearly able to differentiate between those items that are core requirements for bidding or those items that can enhance but do not guarantee a competitive position for potential destinations.

4.3 Measurement of Factor Analysis Results on the Factors to Successfully Attract Conventions

Factor analysis determined the factors that are fundamental to attracting conventions successfully. The factors were determined using several different criteria; eigenvalues greater than 1.0, the overall pattern of eigenvalue decline, and the total percentage of cumulative variance explained by the factors. Based on these considerations, a total of five factors were determined to be the best fit to the data structure.

Statistical results derived from the factor analysis are presented in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 contains the eigenvalues and variance accounted for by each of the five factors. Table 4 provides a summary of the factor loadings for each individual item. Only factor loadings with an absolute value greater than 0.50 were deemed to be useful for interpretative purposes. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was utilized to assess the internal consistency of the extracted factors; a value of 0.856 indicated that the extracted factors were sufficiently reliable to be regarded as valid. Instead of interpreting each item individually, the interpretation of the factor structure was based upon clusters of items that were highly correlated with each factor. A summary of the interpretations of the five factors can be found in Table 5 and further explained as follows.

Table 3: Eigenvalue, Contribution Ratio, and Cumulative Contribution Ratio

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Eigenvalue	5.64	1.89	1.69	1.26	1.15
Contribution Ratio	0.140	0.098	0.094	0.089	0.076
Cumulative Contribution Ratio	0.140	0.238	0.332	0.420	0.496

Table 4: Factor Loadings for Five Factors

Question	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Q1	0.194	0.117	0.814	0.050	-0.003
Q2	0.128	0.120	0.710	0.024	0.024
Q3	0.208	0.078	0.339	0.377	0.114
Q4	0.347	0.017	0.232	0.234	0.074
Q5	0.190	0.173	-0.064	0.588	0.044
Q6	0.049	0.171	0.017	0.551	0.132
Q7	0.123	0.188	0.104	0.344	0.264
Q8	0.061	0.324	0.255	0.263	0.079
Q9	0.150	0.127	0.059	0.545	0.105
Q10	-0.004	0.664	0.087	0.314	0.006
Q11	0.097	0.737	0.098	0.229	0.116
Q12	0.144	0.560	0.084	0.119	0.070
Q13	0.184	0.364	0.319	-.052	0.194
Q14	0.106	0.200	0.075	0.015	0.881
Q15	0.224	0.022	0.036	0.246	0.616
Q16	0.787	0.070	0.210	0.169	0.183
Q17	0.887	0.165	0.138	0.167	0.132
Q18	0.863	0.183	0.178	0.210	0.108
Q19	0.286	0.288	0.360	0.029	0.207

Table 5: Interpretation of Each Factor

Factor	Q No.	Questionnaire item
Factor 1: Amount of information provided in English	16	Extensive information about the area provided in English
	17	Extensive information about the facilities provided in English
	18	Extensive information about the hotel provided in English
Factor 2: Cooperative framework among stakeholders	10	System of cooperation between the convention bureau, city, and prefectural officials in attraction activities
	11	System of cooperation between the convention bureau, facilities, and hotels in attraction activities
	12	System of cooperation between the convention bureau and PCO in attraction activities
Factor 3: The brand recognition of hotels located in the host city	1	Several 4-star and 5-star hotels in the area
	2	Numerous foreign-owned hotels in the area
Factor 4: Use of convention facilities	5	Low usage fees for convention facilities
	6	Flexibility in reservations and usage of convention facilities
	9	Sufficient subsidy and grant money to support events
Factor 5: Culture and tourism resources	14	a unique culture that is attractive to international visitors
	15	Abundance of tourist resources available for excursions

Factor 1 suggests that the accessible nature of inclusive and English speakers for event spaces, accommodations and destinations has a lot to do with how ready a host location is to have international attention and conventions. Factor 2 indicates that cities bidding competitively for convention hosting must also cooperate with the participants involved in convention checklist submission. Cooperation comes from Convention Bureaus working together with the cities, Convention hotels, convention facilities and professional committee organizers; the combined effort provides a more effective approach to obtain bidding success. Factor 3 relates to the location of hotels within the host city. Those hotels tend to enhance the hotel brand reputation. Factor 4 points to the financial and operational flexibility of the convention centers. This refers to low usage fees, flexible reservation agreements, and the availability of subsidies and grants to support the events. Factor 5 expresses that host cities have a unique culture as tourism resources that appeal to participants.

The combination of these five components demonstrates that the ability to successfully attract conventions is dependent upon the effective communication capabilities of the convention center, cooperation between stakeholders, specific characteristics of the site's convention facilities, and cultural/experiential offerings.

5 Discussion

5.1 Characteristics of Respondents and Overall Survey Trends

The response data provides insight into the demographics and related trends, possibly affecting how the individual respondents may view things based on these demographics. The majority of the respondents specialize mainly in Law (17%) and Economics (15%). Geographically, the

majority of them were from outside of major metropolitan regions and primarily located in regions of Japan, including Chubu/Hokuriku (21%) and Chugoku/Shikoku (20%). Therefore, due to this representation, it is possible that each of the respondents would have different, more regional perspectives on developing the economy and obtaining employment.

5.2 Key Factors Identified from Descriptive Analysis

Several prominent factors are highlighted in the survey data that will aid in the successful promotion of conventions. Participants perceived that hotel & catering services are regarded as moderately important, while foreign-owned hotels received the lowest scores. The availability of vegetarian & halal options rated high among those surveyed and reflected the increasing number of attendees with different dietary requirements. With regards to convention facilities, while low usage fees will continue to be critical, the flexibility of accommodation and facility usage rated the highest among respondents; this indicates that adaptability is critical to the success of venue selection. Several respondents stated inspection programs were valuable but were rated less critical than cost effect on the overall bottom line and the flexibility of usage.

Government support in the form of financial assistance was regarded as moderately important in attracting conventions, whereas meetings with key political figures were perceived as relatively less influential, suggesting that financial support is more critical than symbolic political endorsement. Furthermore, a strong system of cooperation among Convention Bureaus, local governments, facilities, and hotels was identified as an essential condition for successful convention bidding. The presence of Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) staff was not rated as highly important compared to other factors.

Another important consideration for cities seeking to attract conventions is cultural appeal, as high-quality tourism products and resources help differentiate host destinations. The availability of extensive English-language information received particularly high ratings, including information related to local areas, facilities, and hotels. By contrast, the availability of public relations materials related to environmental factors was rated lower.

The factor analysis provides important insights regarding the key factors driving cities' ability to attract conventions. All of the five identified factors have a significant impact on the decision-making process used by planners when selecting a location to hold their conferences.

Factor 1, "Amount of information provided in English," illustrates the importance of providing a clear and concise amount of information regarding the area, venue, and accommodations in English. Therefore, the use of clear and understanding English improves information exchange. Factor 2, "Cooperative framework among stakeholders," shows the importance of collaboration among Convention Bureau representatives, government officials, hotel operators, and professional congress organizers (PCOs). The cooperative approaches among stakeholders provide for well-organized management of events, and this can often mean the difference between winning a bid and losing one; thus, cooperation is highly beneficial, while establishing partnership arrangements and defining the responsibilities of partners creates a positive environment for cooperation. Finally, factor 3, "Brand recognition of hotels," illustrates the importance of hotel brands that are recognizable at both the local and international level. If hotel brands are widely recognized, then the organizers are often assured that their accommodation will meet high-quality standards. Therefore, cities that have a broad range of prominent hotel brands maintain a competitive advantage, whereas cities without well-known hotel brands may need to direct resources towards enhancing their hospitality industry.

Factor 4, the "Use of convention facilities," includes many elements important to the

affordability, flexibility, and availability of financial assistance. Cities that provide low usage fees, offer flexible reservation arrangements, and provide financial assistance to service providers, including subsidies and rebates, are at a competitive advantage compared to other bidding cities. Planners who have limited budgets find comfort in cost-effective, adaptable facilities. Factor 5 highlights the role of cultural and tourism resources in enhancing the overall attractiveness of conference destinations. Such resources contribute additional experiential value for conference participants, which is likely to be positively perceived by planners when evaluating host cities with rich cultural and tourism offerings.

To be successful in attracting conventions, cities need to provide effective communication, stakeholder collaboration, strong hospitality infrastructure, affordable and flexible venues, and wonderful cultural experiences.

5.3 Implications of Pre-COVID Findings in the Post-COVID MICE Environment

Research data used for this paper were collected prior to Covid-19; however, these data are still relevant when reinterpreted based on new developments in the MICE sector.

According to new data released by JNTO, there was a gradual recovery of international conventions beginning in 2022. Hybrid convention formats have also become increasingly common since that time. This presents the chance to review the critical success elements identified in this research with respect to today's post-Covid world. Although hybrid conference formats expanded rapidly in the post-Covid period, by 2025 international conferences in Japan have shown a clear increase in in-person participation, indicating a gradual return to pre-pandemic meeting practices.

It appears that providing pre-event information in English has become an even more important factor for organizers since the introduction of new meeting styles such as hybrid and on-line. Following the expansion of hybrid and online meeting formats, organizers now need timely and easily accessible information to make decisions regarding destination(s) and venue(s) as well as the technology used for hybrid and online events, and the operational role of technology (including the ability to share knowledge). Thus, the emphasis on pre-event English-language information proved to be a key factor during the Covid-19 period, and the same can be expected for future events.

Stakeholder cooperation has assumed an even more pivotal role following the Covid-19 pandemic's outbreak and spread. The health crisis has illuminated the value of cooperating with other convening organizations, such as Convention Bureaus and local governments, as well as multiple sectors involved in health-related work, crisis communication, and contingency planning. The stakeholder partnerships identified within this study provide foundational capacities by which many organizations coordinate their operations to better respond to the potential impact of uncertainty on their operations.

As for this writing, convention facilities undergo further evaluation of their roles and uses within the convention business. While the financial and operational factors of cost and flexibility have always been important to organizers prior to Covid-19, current trends are indicating that an increasing number of organizers need facilities with adaptable hybrid environments and cancellation options. This signifies that the relationship between the use of convention facilities remains valid, but the particulars of how those relationships are defined have changed.

Both cultural and tourism resources continue to serve as enhancing value propositions for conventions. Although the increasing trend toward incorporating online components into business events continues, the opportunity for on-site cultural engagement and experience remains

connected to regional engagement. The emergence of MICE policy initiatives in Japan has further clarified the need to connect MICE with broader tourism efforts, reaffirming that the value of cultural and tourism resources identified in this study continues to be of importance to professional associations and organizations.

Taken together, these observations suggest that while the empirical data reflect a pre-Covid period, the core factors identified in this study retain their relevance in the post-Covid MICE environment. At the same time, the findings should be understood as requiring contextual updating, particularly with respect to digitalization and hybrid event management.

6 Conclusion and Limitations

This paper examines the factors affecting the success of attracting business conventions in a scenario with rival cities from experienced MICE stakeholders, particularly those connected to Japan. It used exploratory factor analysis on a dataset from 220 survey responses to determine five factors: “Amount of information provided in English”, “Cooperative framework among stakeholders”, “Brand recognition of hotels”, “Use of convention facilities” and “Culture and tourism resources.” For cities looking to stand out against their competition and grow their potential convention business, it is essential for them to develop these five areas. This study is an important contribution to studies conducted in Japan because few studies have focused on MICE stakeholders.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the data were collected over a limited period, and continuous data collection was not possible due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, although approximately 150 Convention Bureaus and MICE-related organizations participated in the Japan MICE EXPO (IME), the number of valid responses was limited to 220, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. In addition, because the respondents were drawn from IME participants, a degree of selection bias may be present, as they are likely to be highly involved in MICE-related activities. Furthermore, regional differences within Japan were not explicitly controlled for, and perceptions of success factors may vary depending on local economic conditions and levels of MICE development.

Collecting the empirical data before the Covid-19 pandemic affirms that these success criteria are still conceptually valid for use today. It is also apparent from the research that researchers must interpret and adapt their approaches to convention bidding to a greater degree based on the region where they operate. Future research examining the factors affecting successful convention bidding in Japan would benefit greatly from including larger samples, longitudinal data, and explicit consideration of regional differences.

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