

## ASSESSING CONFERENCE TOURISM AND ITS ROLE IN DESTINATION MARKETING: THE CASE STUDY OF JORDAN

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess conference tourism and its role in marketing Jordan as a tourist destination. The study used the qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with 18 experts in conference tourism, including 11 face-to-face interviews and seven telephone interviews. For the study aim, a theoretical framework was developed based on an in-depth review of the literature. The interviews targeted respondents from different regions in Jordan, including Amman, Aqaba, the Dead Sea, Irbid, and Petra. For data analysis, thematic analysis was used. The study results showed some strengths and a great potential to build a distinctive brand for conference tourism in the future in Jordan. For this to be done, there is a need to overcome a set of shortcomings, the most important of which are the absence of systematic co-operation between the private sector and the government, focusing on limited areas for holding conferences, insufficient government support for conferences, the traditional framework for conference activities, and the lack of human resources specialized in organizing conferences. Based on the results, theoretical and managerial implications were suggested.

### KEYWORDS

Destination Marketing, Tourism, Conferences, Jordan.

### المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم سياحة المؤتمرات ودورها في تسويق الأردن كوجهة سياحية. استخدمت الدراسة المنهج النوعي من خلال مقابلات شبه منظمة مع 18 خبيراً في سياحة المؤتمرات، بما في ذلك 11 مقابلة وجهًا لوجه وسبع مقابلات هاتفية. لتحقيق هدف الدراسة، تم تطوير إطار نظري على أساس مراجعة متعمقة للأدبيات. استهدفت المقابلات مشاركين من مناطق مختلفة في الأردن، بما في ذلك عمان، العقبة، البحر الميت، إربد، والبتراء. لتحليل البيانات، تم استخدام التحليل الموضوعي. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بعض نقاط القوة والإمكانات العالية لبناء علامة تجارية مميزة في سياحة المؤتمرات في مستقبلاً في الأردن، ما يتطلب تجاوز مجموعة من الثغرات أهمها غياب التعاون المنهجي بين القطاع الخاص والحكومة، التركيز على مجالات محدودة لعقد المؤتمرات، عدم كفاية الدعم الحكومي للمؤتمرات، الإطار التقليدي لأنشطة المؤتمرات، ونقص الموارد البشرية المتخصصة في تنظيم المؤتمرات. بناءً على النتائج، تم اقتراح عدد من التوصيات النظرية والإدارية.

### الكلمات الدالة

تسويق المقصد، سياحة المؤتمرات، الأردن.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

From the mid-to-late 1990s, there was an expansion in the scope of event research. In the 21st century, global social media coverage of conferences and mega-events has propelled the events industry to center stage, making events a staple of today's mainstream lifestyle (Getz and Page 2014). The human desire to meet and exchange ideas, which is the basis of agreements and meetings, is as old as humanity. However, a rapidly developing tourism field did not appear until the second half of the twentieth century, when conference tourism emerged, which is seen as an essential source of tourism spending, foreign exchange earnings, investment, and employment (Horváth 2011). Because of this, an increasing number of destinations consider the development of conference tourism a crucial issue when considering its lasting effects. However, it can take years to plan as iconic events are not simple to create. However, these destinations may seek to adopt convention tourism as a distinguishing feature of their location (Hall 1989).

Research has shown that public sector marketing strategies can take advantage of the long-term conferences for sites and communities to achieve economic and social benefits (Pugh and Wood 2004). Conference tourism has become an effective competitive tool, with many destinations hosting a range of conferences that attract tourists. From this point of view, and to achieve a competitive advantage for one destination over another, it is necessary to work on providing uniqueness and innovation through a well-designed organization of conferences which is attractive to the client. This gives a new face to the destination that distinguishes it from others, including, for example, locating conferences appropriately or placing them positively in the minds of consumers (Getz and Page 2014). Popular tourist destinations may require less effort in international marketing since these destinations with outstanding features tend to have a high level of public services that must be established for international visitors (Wang and Jin 2019). Moreover, for destinations that are still in the development stage or designs with an increasing level of poverty, investments in mega-conferences and tourism must compete with projects aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of the population creating challenges for obtaining financing for tourism-related activities (Lamberti et al. 2011). Hence, the role of conferences is shown in adding benefits such as a strong brand, unique product features, and increasing market share (Hemmonsby and Tichaawa 2019).

In Jordan, conference tourism is a new design on which the tourism industry has recently become based. Jordan is ranked second in Arab conference tourism due to its geographical location, security, and stability (Alodwan 2020). Nevertheless, cultural tourism is still the only distinguishing feature of Jordanian tourism, despite its potential to adopt conference tourism as a competitive activity at the international level. In this context, this study focuses on issues related to the impact of conferences to promoting tourist destinations and the creation of a destination brand through conference tourism and its role in improving tourism infrastructure.

## 2. Conference Tourism: Concepts and Significance

The term "events" is somewhat broad, but the focus on conference tourism narrows it down. Events are temporal phenomena that separate them from other tourist attractions (Getz, 2000). Conference tourism has increased and expanded significantly during the current century due to several social, economic, political, and other factors, which significantly impacted the growth of this sector. The need to hold conferences was due to economic crises, political changes, social development, technological and industrial development, and the presence of competent authorities and organizations that facilitated organizing for various purposes (Hariri 2016).

Convention tourism is part of the term MICE, which comes from Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. It is one of the ways to classify the four main market areas in business tourism (Loykie and James, 2007). MICE is defined as an industry of agreements, incentive travel, services, and exhibitions in which a group participates with shared interests in several fields (Kesrul 2004). Rogers and Davidson (2015) defined a

conference as a gathering of many people together after communicating with them, where a scientific, social, or research topic is discussed. Conference tourism is defined as: "tourism that occurs as a result of international meetings that are held to discuss a specific issue or problem. The purpose of which may be to draw up a strategy for an organization that includes more than one country. The topic of research in the conference may be political, economic, scientific, social, artistic, sports, or other areas of life. These conferences are usually held in capital and major cities or tourist cities (El-mekawy et al. 2018).

Events are an essential and decisive factor for the success of a tourist destination, which requires a competitive offer in the provision of tourism services and stimulating the region to develop processes for the benefit of society (Lu et al. 2020). It is also considered one of the most important industries contributing to international trade and an essential means of transferring and sharing knowledge from the developed world with the developing world (Soteriades and Dimou 2011). As a rapidly growing sector, event tourism, including conferences, is considered one of the critical sources of socio-economic development by providing sources of income, creating job opportunities, and reducing poverty (Alanzeh et al. 2018). It also multiplies different economic sectors at the destination and is a motivational tool for inward investment (Rogers 1998).

In general, all types of tourism positively affect the quality of tourism services. However, conference tourism has a unique and positive impact, as the spending rate far exceeds other traditional forms of tourism. Conferences in many countries express the political status and stability of the state and social position. They describe the degree of urbanization of the people and their awareness of the importance of collective and local work (El-mekawy et al., 2018). Commonly, conference participants tend to stay in groups for their stay at the destination. Therefore, imparting local culture or information related to the area can be easier (Coaffee and Rogers 2008). It increases participants' experience and knowledge of the region, making them more familiar with the local culture.

### **3. Conference Tourism as a Marketing Tool**

Conferences serve as marketing mechanisms for cities and destinations, whereby governments and responsible authorities invest resources to promote the development of the conference industry. Therefore, regional markets must be carefully considered, and market competitiveness must increase in line with global market demand and recent trends (Wang and Jin 2019). Events are a vital factor for the success of a tourist destination, which requires a competitive offer in the provision of tourism services and stimulating the region to develop processes for the benefit of society (Lu, Zhu, and Wei 2020). Many conferences are considered essential in marketing campaigns, as they gather sales and purchases in one place, reduce product searches, and provide opportunities to save time (Horváth 2011). These events are considered a tool for promotion and bringing a free market from perfect competition that motivates companies to improve their technologies (Yego 2015).

The main objective of convention tourism is to build a more prosperous and attractive destination, attract more tourists, and have an impact, especially in off-peak seasons. Organizing conferences in some countries has been linked to establishing tourism programs to visit the country's sites. It is a way to promote tourism to countries and a source of significant economic returns (Yego 2015). On the other hand, convention tourism holds a symbolic value for travelers with unique interests, providing competitive advantages, defining destinations in the market, and creating destination profiles (Van Niekerk 2017).

Recent studies also indicate that destinations create unforgettable travel experiences and strive to position their brands as event tourism destinations (Morgan et al. 2010). According to Esu and Arrey (2009), destination branding is a term commonly used by professionals in tourism literature to explain developing a unique identity for a tourist destination, helping actual and potential tourists distinguish one tourist site from another. The mere association between the conference

and destination is not as significant as exploring the relationship of the conference brand with the destination brand. Both brand and destination are similar, while event and destination play an important correlative role when paired together (Kim et al. 2011). A brand destination to be built through conference tourism, using conference packages and deciding how to present them is an essential step. Using conference packages and choosing how to present them creatively is a crucial step. The customer journey is a combination of services and a holistic experience. Getting them to stay longer requires the development of attractive additions to packages the participants don't want to miss, including unique activities that require further work. So, all that is offered to the conference tourist is a service package that includes tangible and intangible elements (Kauppinen, 2012).

#### 4. Conference Tourism in Jordan

According to the latest classifications launched by the International Congress and Convention Association in 2018, Jordan ranked second in conference tourism among the countries of the Middle East, preceded by the United Arab Emirates, where the Kingdom hosted twenty-two conferences of international associations. Despite the recent interest in conference tourism in Jordan, many steps have not yet been taken to achieve this goal. Although Jordan is characterized by safety, political stability, and diversity of the tourism product, there is a significant shortcoming in the qualification of workers within conference tourism (Alananzeh et al. 2018). Understanding the reasons for the success of the Davos Economic Conference in Jordan shows the need to focus on the weaknesses before the strengths in the success of organizing conferences to find the best ways to transform obstacles into investment opportunities that exploit conference tourism in Jordan. To create a distinctive brand for the country, it is also necessary to reconsider the decline in most conferences in Petra, Wadi Rum, Jerash, Madaba, and Aqaba.

Theoretically, no studies dealt with conference tourism in Jordan, except the study of (Alananzeh et al. 2018). The study showed one aspect of tourism marketing: the geographical distribution of conferences. However, this indicates an administrative problem in organizing conferences, as the study showed that most conferences are concentrated in the northern and central regions of Jordan, which would neglect the marketing of remote areas with highly popular tourist attractions.

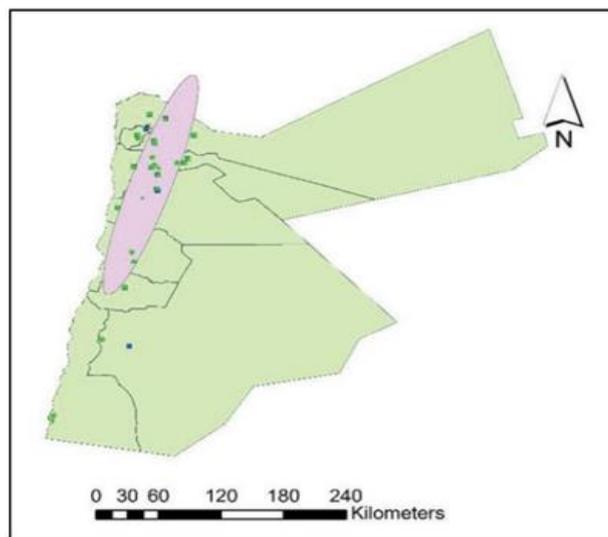


Figure 1: Geographical distribution of conferences in Jordan

Source: Alananzeh et al (2018)

#### 5. Theoretical Framework

An in-depth literature review was carried out to design a theoretical framework for the current study and thus select the study questions. Despite the scarcity of studies that addressed the role of

conferences in marketing the tourist destination, some studies showed a set of essential considerations in managing conference tourism in different contexts. The most important of these considerations can be summarized in the location and time of the conference, services and facilities, competitive advantage, socio-cultural activities, and government support. The second consideration in defining the study questions was to include innovation, which was not mentioned in the literature that undertakes conference tourism. Moreover, the role of conferences in marketing tourist destinations was questioned as it had not been clearly addressed in previous studies. Table 1 shows a summary of the most essential considerations in organizing conferences.

Table 1: Considerations for organizing conferences:

Authors	Considerations
(Hughes 1988), (Cong et al. 2014), (Alananzeh et al. 2018), (Getz 2000)	Spatial and temporal distribution
(Dwyer and Mistilis 1999), (Lawrence and McCabe 2001)	Holding conferences in marginalized regions
(Man et al. 2007)	Seasonality consideration
(Van Niekerk 2017)	Competitive advantages
(Alananzeh et al. 2018), (Wagen, Lynn Van der Lauren 2010)	Services and facilities
(Chen 2006), (Kim, Yoon, and Kim 2011), (Oklobdzija 2015)	The setting of the area and the attractiveness of the surroundings
(Dwyer and Mistilis 1999)	Co-operation of public and private stakeholders
(Dwyer and Mistilis 1999)	Government support
(Getz 2013), (Lau, Milne, and Johnston 2005), (Ziakas and Costa 2011)	Socio-cultural aspects/ engaging tourists in activities with local communities
(Alananzeh et al. 2018)	Staff skills and experiences
(Castrogiovanni 1996)	Market analysis

Based on this review, four questions were formulated to undertake considerations that evaluate the quality of conferences and their role in marketing the tourist destination:

**Question 1:** In general, how does conference tourism contribute to the marketing of Jordan as a tourist destination?

**Question 2:** How competitive is Jordan as a conference destination, and accordingly, how do you imagine the future of conference tourism in Jordan?

**Question 3:** What kind of conferences do you organize, and what are your procedures to ensure that Jordan is marketed as a tourist destination?

**Question 4:** On what basis do you choose the time and place of the conference to reflect positively on the marketing of Jordan as a tourist destination?

Each of the four questions included a number of considerations in Table 1. Because of the holistic nature of these questions, the interviewees were reminded of these considerations to ensure more meaningful answers.

## 6. Methods

This section presents the method used in the current study, collecting data from primary and secondary sources and study population and sampling. This study used the qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews to achieve the study's objectives. The semi-structured interview is the interview in which questions are arranged before the interview time. The respondent is allowed to explain some issues using open questions (Bryman 2016). This approach determines the broad outlines of the topics that the study aims to address. Before starting the interviews in their final form, five phone interviews were conducted with experts in organizing

conferences. The general framework of the study's objectives was discussed, especially the role of conference tourism in marketing the tourist destination. It became clear through these interviews that there is a superficial knowledge of the respondents on this subject. This recognition helped define a specific formulation of the interview questions and determine their type, as the researchers adopted semi-structured interviews. In this context, Vaivio (2012) points out that one of the advantages of semi-structured interviews is that they are somewhat flexible and can express answers in the form preferred by the respondent and researcher. The current study determined a set of open questions that consider the lack of one single direction on which to base their ideas but helps discover details that the researcher may overlook and have value in enriching the results. In addition, some interview questions were reformulated when they were understood to be out of context.

The study population consisted of approximately (150) conference organizers in Jordan, among companies specializing in organizing conferences, hotels, and others. The study sample consisted of (18) interviewees, (11) face-to-face interviews, and (7) telephone interviews. The sample size was determined based on the saturation point; that is, any information in new situations will not add anything to the findings (Guest et al. 2006). The interviews targeted respondents from different regions in Jordan, including Amman, Aqaba, Dead Sea, Irbid, and Petra, who are officials and administrators in Jordan's tourism and conference sector. The nature of the respondents' positions varied as follows:

- Director of the Conferences Accommodation Unit at Jordan Tourism Board.
- Seven Heads of conference departments in five- and four-star hotels in Amman, the Dead Sea, Petra, Aqaba, and Irbid.
- Three Companies specialized in organizing conferences in Jordan.
- Seven travel agencies that have organized some conferences previously.

The interview questions were conducted from the beginning of August to the end of November 2021. The interview questions included issues related to conference tourism and destination marketing (Nguyen 2017), the importance of the place and time of the conference in marketing destinations, and the obstacles and challenges facing conferences in a new destination (S raphin et al. 2018), the extent of the competitiveness of the destination as a destination for conferences (Wang and Jin 2019), the impact of co-operation with international and local stakeholders who specialized in conferences on the development of the host country (Ogembo 2018), and the effect of engaging tourists in activities with local communities, and its role in marketing local products (Higham and Hinch 2002).

Thematic analysis was used to deal with the study findings. This type of analysis is appropriate for any study that seeks to discover the use of interpretations and provides a methodological component to data analysis. Thematic analysis offers an opportunity to understand an issue more broadly and to find popular themes and ideas from more than one participant. It is helpful to allocate a narrative of various data to gain a clear, logical understanding of the respondent's ideas and convey his experience, then link them to the data (Alhojailan and Ibrahim 2012).

## 7. Findings and Discussion

The interviews' questions can be summarized by the impact of conferences on the marketing of the destination, the nature and type of conferences that are organized, their role in marketing Jordan as a tourist destination, the importance of the place and time of the conference, the obstacles and challenges facing the conference organisers in a new destination, the extent of Jordan's competitiveness as a destination for conferences, the impact of co-operation with international and local destinations that specialized in organizing conferences, the involvement of tourists with the local community, and the recommendations of respondents based on their experience in organizing conferences to raise Jordan's competitiveness in tourism.

***Question 1: In general, how does conference tourism contribute to the marketing of Jordan as a tourist destination?***

Respondents (1, 3, 4, 9) indicated that Jordan is distinguished as an incubator for conferences locally and regionally in medical, scientific, and other fields, in addition to its distinguished security and political stability compared to the countries of the region. He added that holding conferences in international tourist destinations such as Petra and the Dead Sea contributes to Jordan's effective marketing as a tourist destination. Despite this, respondents (6, 16) indicated that the impact of marketing conferences is relatively limited because Jordan relies on marketing through word of mouth more than other available means of marketing, such as events. In this context, respondent (6) said: "Conferences play a limited role in marketing Jordan for tourism due to several shortcomings in holding conferences in Jordan. We have gaps in competitiveness that make surrounding countries such as Egypt have priority in the field." At the same time, respondents (4, 5, 8, 12) referred to a clear positive impact of conferences on marketing services and tourist facilities, as this type of tourism depends on the high selectivity of the conference venue. Respondents (9, 7, 10, 18, 12) in the same context confirmed that conference tourism in Jordan is one of the most effective forms of tourists' decision to re-visit. Respondent (17) stated: "Conferences have a great role in marketing Jordan's tourism regionally and globally, especially after the holding of the Davos Conference in the Dead Sea, which contributed to increasing support for tourism facilities by international organizations, especially for the volume of media and press that deals with this major event for the participation of heads of state."

Through the responses to this question, a difference of opinion appears regarding the effectiveness of conferences in marketing Jordan as a tourist destination. This difference may be due to the absence of a criterion that measures marketing effectiveness. There is unanimity from all respondents that conferences should be used to market the destination. In this regard, Nguyen (2017) pointed out the role of conferences in promoting a destination, which is vital for customers to determine a destination, organize trips to an area, and thus provide considerable benefits to the destination. Conference tourism advantages are due to the high expenditure of tourists that supports the marketing orientations (Konar and Hussain 2018). Horváth (2011) pointed to experts' opinions on conference tourism, who see that it contributes to the positive image of the destination through various media. He also referred to the high income of conference participants and their positions that shape public opinions. Getz (1997) emphasized that events, including conferences, are powerful tools in targeting desired segments of tourism markets and hosting events, enhancing long-term awareness of the host destination in tourism markets.

***Question 2: How competitive is Jordan as a conference destination, and accordingly, how do you imagine the future of conference tourism in Jordan?***

Respondents (1, 10) indicated the high competitiveness of Jordan as a destination for conferences due to its geographic nature and beautiful weather, the high tourist value of some sites, and strength in specific sectors, such as medicine. Respondents (3, 4, 8) noted that the increased competitiveness and capabilities in hotels, conference centers, and equipped halls make Jordan a thriving conference destination. Respondent (7) added: "There is good competition for Jordan, especially in the political circumstances of the surrounding countries, due to the security and political stability." Most respondents emphasized a high potential for competition, but there must be more work on developing and reducing prices in co-operation with the government and private agencies. Competitive prices were expressed compared to regional competitors such as Egypt, Turkey, and the UAE. They argued that these destinations are superior to us regarding infrastructure, facilities, and lower prices.

On the contrary, respondents (11, 17) said that the great potential characterizes Jordan regarding security and stability compared to neighboring countries and the diversity of tourist sites. They also referred to the availability of facilities, services, and infrastructure suitable for conferences. Between this opinion and that respondent (13): "Jordan possesses the potential and attractive nature to make it one of the priority competitive countries in the region, due to its security and stability, but its competitiveness at present is somewhat limited, due to the lack of support, marketing, and encouraging and appropriate prices." Respondents (15, 16) noted that Jordan's competitive advantage in the area of conferences does not exceed the regional level. Yet, a lot of effort is required to reach a highly competitive advantage.

As for the future of Jordan as a destination for conference tourism, respondents (1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 16, 17) emphasized the promising future of Jordan in the field of conferences. Still, more work must be done on some of the shortcomings in organizational and marketing aspects and studying the competitive markets. As respondents (5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18) pointed out, conference organizers need to reconsider price policies in light of the excellence of neighboring countries by offering competitive prices. This review of pricing policies requires government support for tourist service facilities.

From what respondents have said about the future of conference tourism in Jordan, it can be concluded that the competitive advantage needs more professional marketing efforts, given the specificity associated with conference tourism. There is also an urgent need for government to support the costs of organizing conferences and providing the sector with global expertise since competitiveness encounters difficulties compared to the neighboring countries. This means that talking about global competitiveness is still early. In this context, Soteriades and Dimou (2011) indicated that events had become an integral part of the tourism industry in many tourist destinations worldwide as an additional competitive advantage to attract visitors. Here, excellence in organizing conferences in all aspects contributes to increasing the competitive value of the destination. Wang and Jin (2019) argued that conferences have a significant role in developing many destinations and raising their competitive value, thus improving the economy of host destinations, encouraging cultural exchange, promoting the preservation of local cultures, and enhancing awareness of destinations. Felsenstein and Fleischer (2003) added that destination managers view events as essential for promoting tourism development and increasing competitiveness.

***Question 3: What kind of conferences do you organize, and what procedures ensure that Jordan is marketed as a tourist destination?***

To further clarify the question and to ensure answers in the required context, the following related questions were asked:

-What is the importance of the place and time of the conference in marketing Jordan's tourism and attracting participants to the conference?

-Are the sites chosen by you that are tourism-competitive sites, or may they increase the competitive value regionally and globally?

-What are the obstacles and challenges facing holding conferences in new Jordan tourist areas set for selecting the location and time for the conference? What is the impact of this on the satisfaction of the participants?

Most respondents agreed that the location and time of the conference are of great importance in attracting participants and thus marketing Jordan as a tourist destination. The place with high tourist value, the fair weather, and the time are success factors for conference tourism. The time for holding conferences is usually chosen outside peak times, and conferences are typically held in Jordan in Aqaba, the Dead Sea, and Amman due to the availability of all the necessary services and facilities, the fair weather, the sites' attractiveness, and the quality of the services provided. Respondent (4) stated: "The conference site is chosen based on its ability to receive large numbers of participants, provide them with high-quality services, marketing for these sites, the site's ability

to attract the visitor's interest and the appropriate weather." Respondent (17) mentioned that the events' locations are often places that have been marketed for tourism. Many respondents confirmed that the location and time criteria are based on the hotel's capacity, ease of access, distance from the airport, the attractiveness of the conference site and its features, and the availability of services and facilities for visitors. Respondent (11) critically clarified that the criteria for choosing a conference location and time are not often based on a survey study. Therefore, traditional ideas are resorted to as a criterion, such as the availability of services, the popularity of the place, and accessibility. Respondent (3) mentioned that the most significant focus is on the King Hussein Convention Center in the Dead Sea as an operating destination due to its global advantages for hosting conferences and its attractive location at the lowest point of the globe. Respondents (5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13) indicated that the conference venue choice depends on the conference type. Respondents (1, 3, 6, 8, 14) also confirmed that the choice of the conference site depends on the capacity. For example, suppose the conference is very large. In that case, it is difficult to hold it in Aqaba, which forces them to have it in Amman or the Dead Sea due to the availability of well-equipped conference rooms, services, and facilities.

Regarding the obstacles and challenges that new tourist areas encounter, all respondents agreed that the most important of them are the lack of the necessary services and infrastructure, the limited capacity of hotels, the difficulty of accessing the conference due to the lack of appropriate means of transportation, and the distance from the airport. In this context, respondent (2) said: "The lack of marketing and government support for these sites, or even from the private sector, has led to these sites being unknown and undesirable by conference organizers." Some also talked about the difficulty in obtaining licenses from government agencies, the exceptionally high hotel operational costs, and the difficulty of securing approvals for some conferences or participants. The respondent (9) added that the period of holding conferences is often limited to three and four days, which means the participant does not have enough time to visit remote places. Hence, most conferences are held close to all the necessary services and facilities and in competitive tourist sites that allow participants to see them before departure. Respondent (11) referred to the high cost and the bureaucratic procedures for holding any conference and exhibition inside Jordan. These answers show the inability of decision-makers in the public and private sectors to adopt tourist sites that received a lesser effort of promotion. Séraphin et al. (2018) emphasized that hosting events in a specific area presents a unique opportunity to redefine the destination to develop remote areas with promising tourism potential. However, in order to strive in this direction, it is necessary to rehabilitate these sites as successful alternatives. It is argued that when presenting a destination image based on one specific feature, we must market cultural elements to underpin it. (Getz, 2000) noted that events depend on uniqueness or prestige for their success. Andranovich et al. (2001) argued that destinations that are still in the development stage or that suffer from a high level of poverty should compete in investing in major events. (Getz, 2000) pointed out that several events can exist within a given area and compete for scarce resources in the area (places include money, clients, and volunteers). Terzi et al. (2013) listed several criteria for evaluating the importance of the conference site: 1) an infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of the event, 2) providing appropriate transportation, 3) the needs of participants in terms of accommodation and facilities, 4) a destination with heritage historic and cultural ability to attract the interest of participants and increase their numbers. 5) a destination with suitable climatic conditions for hosting conferences, 6) the ability to meet the needs of visitors in terms of nutrition and entertainment, 7) a safe destination free from acts of theft or terrorism, 8) a quiet environment that ensures the smooth running of conferences, 9) a destination that provides adequate and accessible sanitary conditions free of communicable diseases, 10) the destination's use of the international language to better serve the participants at home and abroad.

## 8. Conclusion

This study aims to assess conference tourism and its role in marketing Jordan as a tourist destination by identifying the strengths and shortcomings of managerial practices. Through the interviewees' responses, it could be argued that Jordan has excellent potential to build a distinctive

brand in conference tourism. This includes the variety of tourism patterns, security, facilities, and services. However, conference tourism is still managed traditionally. In this regard, some critical issues arise, including the need for systematic co-operation between the private sector and the government, the direction of some conferences to marginalized tourist sites with high tourism potential, the qualification of professional human resources in the field of conference tourism, the organization of joint conferences with international bodies that have a long history in conference tourism, novelty-seeking, conduction of market research, and adoption of socio-cultural activities.

To make destinations more efficient in terms of conference tourism through some measures, it has become necessary to have a proper system to deal with this category of tourists. Among the most prominent of these measures was the provision of competitive packages in terms of providing the ideal location for relaxation, effective use of the time of stay through various recreational activities, and engaging tourists in activities with local communities and internal excursions to tourist sites in the destination (Ziakas and Costa 2011). An event can be the primary driver of a potential tourist to visit a particular destination. When a tourist visits a destination to attend conferences or events, they also tend to stay before and after the event (Oklobdzija 2015). The reputation and image of the site and the destination's promotional appeal through marketing operations are essential contributors to the effectiveness of destinations. Conference organizers and marketing officials need to understand business tourists' preferences and desired values (Crouch and Louviere 2004). This includes the conference venue or distance, the cost of accommodation, the provision of facilities and services, security and safety, and other specific issues (Rogers 2013).

For a competitive advantage for Jordan in conference tourism, the study addresses decision-makers' need to attract investors and contract with professional marketing companies in this field. This recommendation comes based on the participants' answers that showed a traditional approach to conference organization. Theoretically, the current study recommends researchers carry out studies on creativity and innovation in conference tourism to build a brand that distinguishes the country in conference tourism, in addition to enhancing the role of the local community and socio-cultural aspects in enriching the marketing role of conference tourism.

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