

Towards a Model of Convention Bureau Competitiveness

Emma Delaney¹

¹ University of Surrey

Received: 15 June 2021 Accepted: 30 June 2021 Published: 15 July 2021

Abstract

Convention bureaus play a pivotal role in bidding for destination events such as international congresses and conventions. Although competition to host business events is increasing from a growing number of rival destinations, there has been very limited research to date exploring the determinants that contribute to the efficacy of a convention bureau. This investigation adopts a qualitative exploration of the elements of convention bureau effectiveness. Interviews with twenty-five meeting planners and senior convention bureau staff has revealed that having core resources but also additional support with visa applications can give convention bureaus a competitive advantage. Additionally, bureaus that have access to a range of destination stakeholders to include business leaders, and can demonstrate that they are experienced and trustworthy are considered to be more competitive. The results of this investigation are presented in the first model of convention bureau competitiveness which is a tool that can be used to underpin business tourism policy and strategy in the management of destinations.

Index terms— convention bureau, destination management, convention bureau competitiveness, policy, business tourism.

The Introduction onvention bureaus are an example of a destination management organisation (DMO) and function to promote a particular destination in order to attract business events and therefore business tourists. Convention bureaus play a significant role in the lengthy and complex bidding process for events such as national and international conventions and congresses. In recent years, competition to host such events has intensified (Park et al., 2014) and although these are events typically held by not for profit organisations (e.g. social, military, educational, religious, fraternal (SMERF) groups) they attract large delegate numbers and therefore generate significant economic spend in the destination (Rogers, 2013). As such there are a growing number of convention bureaus specifically targeting international association conventions (Nolan, 2020). This sector of the events and tourism industry is robust, and pre-Covid-19 had demonstrated exponential growth over the last decade (Nolan, 2020). In particular, the International Convention and Congress Association (ICCA, 2015) suggest that non-traditional destinations (second tier cities) are poised to take over from the current leaders. As the events industry recovers from the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, venues are seeing an increase in bookings for in person events (Russell, 2021) and research indicates that the events industry will continue to expand year on year (Surplice, 2021). Consequently destinations have found, and will continue to find it increasingly challenging to attract the attention of meeting planners (Chiappa, 2012) yet despite this, there has been limited research to date exploring the role of DMOs in this process or in defining the attributes of an effective convention bureau (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014, Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010).

Most convention bureaus are at least partially state funded and many operate in accordance with a national business tourism policy (Reinhold, Beritelli & Grünig, 2018). Yet although tourism policy has been identified as the mechanism to move the events sector toward a more stable and profitable future (Spiller, 2002) governments lack a framework of analysis which will determine the level of support required within a policy (Dwyer et al., 2000). This paper will explore the development of convention bureaus and the literature on the role of DMOs in attracting association meetings, conventions and congresses. This paper presents the results of interviews with senior convention bureau staff and meeting planners from around the world and concludes with the development

46 of the first model of convention bureau competitiveness. This model makes a significant contribution to knowledge
47 of the role of convention bureaus in attracting events to destinations. Furthermore, this research illustrates how
48 this new model can be applied to convention bureau benchmarking and policy related decisions for business
49 tourism organisations.

50 1 II.

51 2 Context

52 The interrelated private and public stakeholders who jointly serve the needs of business events (conventions,
53 conferences, exhibitions etc.) can be grouped into physical attractions, sociocultural attractions, infrastructure
54 (event venues, transport providers, restaurants etc.) and accommodation providers (Caber, Albayrak &
55 ?smay?ll?, 2017). As a whole, this cluster of suppliers form a destination which is then marketed to both leisure
56 and business tourists and meeting and event planners through a DMO who manage and coordinate the overall
57 brand of the destination. A DMO or a destination management company (DMC) may be any private or publicly
58 funded organisation that has responsibility for officially representing an area as a tourism destination (Rogers,
59 2013). These terms have evolved from the previously established phrase 'destination marketing organisation'
60 and the change reflects the contemporary role of the organisation which extends far beyond just marketing the
61 location (Reinhold, Beritelli & Grünig, 2018). There is also a general consensus that a DMO or a DMC is a
62 privately-owned organisation whereas a convention bureau or a convention and visitor bureau, carries out the
63 same function but is, at least in part, state funded (Lee, Kim & Kang, 2019, Aureli & Del Baldo, 2019).

64 Historically, most established destinations have had a national as well as several regional and city convention
65 bureaus, all funded through central and/or local government (Reinhold, Beritelli & Grünig, 2018). However,
66 funding for tourism has been reduced or cut altogether in many parts of the world in recent years as governments
67 have had to tighten their belts and prioritise spending. This has resulted in the creation of wholly or partly
68 privatised organisations tasked with the management of the destination and thus many bureaus are now semi-
69 public organisations that partner up with both private sector companies as well as local or regional authorities
70 (Raj, Rashid & Walters, 2013). Given their links to state funding, convention bureaus are thought to be impartial
71 organisations, serving the destination stakeholders equally, whereas DMOs and DMCs are profit driven which
72 may influence how they work with clients and their destination stakeholders (Aureli & Del Baldo, 2019, Rogers,
73 2013).

74 A recognisable convention industry emerged in the nineteenth century in the US and it continues to grow
75 exponentially. The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) are predicting that the industry
76 will change but thrive post Covid-19 (PCMA, 2020). Most conference and exhibition venues are now operating
77 in line with Covid safe policies and are ready to welcome back large business events. Although the pandemic
78 instigated wide global embracing of virtual event technologies (Russell, 2021) which continues to fuel the appetite
79 for hybrid meetings, the interest in face to face MICE events is returning (Wood, 2021) and destinations are
80 already showing signs of recovery (ICCA, 2021).

81 The promotion of convention destinations is a challenge as it requires a particular approach that involves
82 condensing the many identities that the destination may have, created by its diverse stakeholders, into one that
83 is makes it identifiable as business city (McCartney, 2008). Convention bureaus will spend much of their marketing
84 budget focusing on attracting meeting planners to include placing adverts in trade journals, direct mail campaigns
85 and running familiarisation visits in order to win lucrative meetings, conventions and congresses (Opperman &
86 Chon, 1997). In a number of destinations worldwide, the main convention and exhibition center is also owned
87 and operated by the convention bureau. The prevailing trend in destination management is to combine the sales
88 function of both the bureau and the principal event venue as this attracts association meeting planners looking for
89 a one stop shop style of service in the destination (Fenich & Bordelon, 2008). Other standard services offered by
90 convention bureaus to meeting planners include sourcing additional venues, providing an accommodation booking
91 service to delegates as well as a range of marketing support services to promote the conference. The bureau will
92 also connect planners to relevant suppliers (e.g. AV providers, caterers, florists etc.) and they provide help and
93 advice on transport to and within the destination.

94 Given the scope of competition for conventions and congresses, bureaus also offer a number of financial
95 incentives to encourage bookings. This can range from providing discounts for delegates (accommodation,
96 transport, entrance to attractions etc.) to substantial financial support for the organisation of the event, often
97 referred to as subvention. Subvention can take the form of discounted venue hire, a contribution to marketing
98 costs, a company loan, the provision of an event (e.g. a civic reception) or simply a donation (Davidson &
99 Rogers, 2016). Subvention is usually funded through central or local government budgets and as such it is
100 generally available to convention bureaus but not to DMOs (Nolan, 2020). It is generally administered by the
101 convention bureau and offered to not for profit organisations and although the practice is much disliked by
102 industry professionals it is widely used, particularly in destinations where the bureau owns the main convention
103 center (Davidson & Rogers, 2016). A number of traditional convention destinations offer subvention including
104 Vienna and Barcelona and there is much evidence of newer destinations such as Singapore, Jeju (South Korea) and
105 Tallin actively promoting their subvention fund as part of aggressive campaigning to win association congresses
106 (Spalding, 2017). Furthermore, as Nelson & Rys's (2000) and Weber & Chon's (2002) investigations discovered,

107 meeting planners have identified a number of benefits of working with second tier destinations, which includes
108 affordability, generous incentives and exceptionally proactive convention bureau staff. This is strong evidence that
109 in order to survive, convention bureaus must now compete with an increasing list of powerful, rival destinations
110 (Jiang et al., 2016, Chiappa, 2012, Park et al., 2014). Yet despite the multifaceted, significant role of the
111 convention bureau in bidding for and securing destination events, to date there has been very limited scholarly
112 research to conceptualise the important topic of convention bureau competitiveness, which this paper seeks to
113 address.

114 3 Literature Review

115 It is a logical assumption that the competitiveness of a convention bureau will be largely determined by the
116 attractiveness of the destination. In becoming a successful destination for attracting congresses, Crouch and
117 Ritchie's (2003) model of destination competitiveness synthesises the apposite literature and research and it
118 is illustrated in figure 1. This is a comprehensive model as it is underpinned by theories of competitive and
119 comparative advantage including Porter's (1991) five forces, illustrating the affect of existing and new competing
120 destinations, the power of suppliers to the industry, the power of associations and the meeting planners that work
121 for them, and the threat of substitutes (e.g. virtual conferencing). The model points to the fundamental aspects
122 of a destination in 'qualifying and amplifying determinants' such as the need for the destination to be known, to
123 have resources such as infrastructure and (road and/or air) accessibility. Of particular note, is that the model
124 draws attention to how the destination is managed and indicates that destination policy can significantly impact
125 the competitiveness of a destination.

126 There is no single definition of what is meant by destination policy, but this generally refers to the process of
127 setting and developing rules and regulations, guidelines and strategies for destination success (Gursoy, Saayman
128 & Sotiriadus, 2015, Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Although it would appear that tourism policy is still developing
129 (Dredge, 2014), Ritchie and Crouch (2003) suggest that policy formulation should ensure that a destination
130 remains sustainable (it must retain and protect its resources) and competitive (be able to compete effectively
131 within the marketplace). There is also evidence to suggest that a policy for business tourism should be determined
132 at a national rather than a regional level in order to set the tone for the country's industry, mitigate against
133 internal competition for events and ensure its long-term sustainability (Jones & Li, 2015, Weber & Chon, 2002).

134 Such a suggestion was endorsed at the IMEX Policy Forum in 2018, where a national policy was determined
135 to be important as: an integrated approach [helps] to avoid conflicts with other areas of government policy and
136 regulation [plus] immigration, taxation and security policies support a meetings strategy ??Cameron, 2018, p.2)
137 In terms of competing for conferences, destinations must also consider that a competitive advantage is gained not
138 just through resources but also through the capacity to deploy them (Crouch, 2011). It can therefore be concluded
139 that the competitiveness of a destination is centred on adding value to the products available, much of which is
140 achieved through an appropriate policy (Zehrer & Hallmann, 2015). Therefore, investment in infrastructure but
141 also in bidding capabilities (such as subvention) have a pivotal role to play in destination competitiveness ??Getz
142 & Page, 2015). Additionally, Treacy and Wiersema's (1995) value positioning strategy could also be applied to
143 destination competitiveness. This strategy suggests that to prosper a business must match its competitors in
144 two key areas and outperform them in one other with the areas being: organisational competence; operational
145 excellence, product leadership and customer intimacy (Treacy & Wiersema, 1995). Applying this to Crouch and
146 Ritchie's (2003) model would suggest that for destinations to survive they must have a range of resources which
147 are managed by a competent team and they must have strong relationships with customers and clients (e.g.
148 meeting planners).

149 Despite the attention given to destination competitiveness, there has been extremely limited research exploring
150 what makes a convention bureau competitive, yet it is clear that the performance of a DMO is inextricably linked
151 to the success of the destination. Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan (2010) noted this gap in literature and
152 developed the first conceptual model of DMO success. This was subsequently updated by Volgger and Pechlaner
153 (2014) into a model that identifies four determinants of DMO success: resources, networking, transparency and
154 professionalism as illustrated in figure 2. The discussion of these determinants in these two articles is very limited.
155 Resources is likely to refer to the essential elements of DMO services, as outlined by ??eber (2000) as including
156 information about products and services within the destination, marketing materials (e.g. destination images),
157 a venue finding service, an accommodation booking service (e.g. for delegates) and staff to support advance
158 promotion of the congress and delegate registration at the event. Networking may refer to a DMO's relationship
159 with destination stakeholders such as venues, accommodation providers, attractions, transport operators and
160 event suppliers (caterers, florists, photographers etc.). Transparency and professionalism are, however, more
161 oblique terms and more difficult to understand. These terms could refer to the DMO's experience and the trust
162 placed in them by meeting planners.

163 Although Volgger and Pechlaner's (2014) model of DMO success has begun an important discussion on the
164 determinants of a convention bureau's ability to operate effectively, there is clearly much scope to conduct further
165 research to explore and expand on the terminology in this model. Furthermore, there have been a number of
166 barriers to successful policy development for the tourism and events industry felt across the globe, identified by
167 Weber and Chon (2002) as the fragmented nature of the events industry, and by Jones and Li (2015) as a lack of
168 evidence-based decision making. There is however scope to develop such a framework which could be informed by

169 competitive theory and this could influence future policy decisions that underpin business tourism. The starting
170 point for such a framework could lie within a model of DMO competitiveness. Therefore, this investigation
171 has been designed to test and explore Volgger and Pechlaner's (2014) model. Given the level of influence of
172 government policy over convention bureau operations in particular (as opposed to privately owned DMOs), this
173 investigation will focus on convention bureaus. As such, the results of this investigation will culminate in the
174 first model of convention bureau competitiveness. The model has the potential to inform policy makers as well
175 as provide a benchmarking tool for convention bureaus that will enable them to identify areas for development
176 that will increase their effectiveness in an increasingly competitive arena.

177 IV.

178 4 The Methodology

179 A key challenge of social science research is choosing appropriate techniques from the myriad of options now
180 available (Arksey & Knight, 1999) and both qualitative and quantitative methods offered plausible options for
181 this investigation. Both Clark and McCleary (1995) and Crouch (2011) have suggested future research should
182 adopt qualitative methods to look at the broad concept of destination competitiveness. Furthermore, qualitative
183 research has been described as the better approach to capture the 'soft core concepts' that are to be found in
184 organisations that have strategic relationships within a tourism environment (Pansiri, 2005, p.193).

185 As such, a methodology was developed to entail semi-structured interviews with twenty-five elite professionals;
186 a mixture of senior convention bureau managers and leading meeting planners that use convention bureaus when
187 organising association conferences. The target population for this research is extremely large as, based on ICCA
188 league tables, the number of convention bureaus actively competing for association congresses is more than three
189 hundred (ICCA, 2015) and the number of meeting planners operating worldwide is incalculable with global
190 membership of MPI (Meetings Professionals International) totalling more than 60,000 (MPI, 2020). Therefore,
191 interviewees were sourced using industry databases (e.g. ICCA members) and LinkedIn and selected based on
192 their role and experience. Participants were deemed suitable if they had at least ten year's experience in the
193 sector and either led a national or regional convention bureau or worked as a meeting planner in the association
194 conferences sector. Convention bureaus in first and second tier destinations were selected from across Europe,
195 North America, Asia, Africa and Australasia and meeting planners were also based across the globe, working
196 on both domestic and international association conferences. Although this research has no geographic aims
197 or boundaries, a variety of participants was deemed appropriate as this can strengthen the generalisability of
198 results (Easton, 2010). Construct validity was addressed by using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014) and a
199 percentage of participants read the transcript of their interview (which was conducted via telephone or Skype) to
200 check, and verify, the content thereby ensuring ecological validity, or communicative validity which authenticates
201 the data (Flick, 2006).

202 The coding of the data was broadly conducted through content and domain analysis. This was done first to
203 determine commonalities in data based on semantic relationships (Savin-Baden and Major, 2012) and then to
204 reduce the data into relevant and noteworthy categories (Flick, 2006) and to create categories based on substantive
205 statements (Gillham, 2000). Data was analysed by using Saldaña's (2016) two-cycle, seven-step approach. First
206 cycle coding was used primarily to breakdown the large quantity of data and second cycle coding was used for meta
207 coding, clustering and annotating key themes. The analysis of the data confirmed the four key determinants of
208 DMO competitiveness (core resources, additional services, trust and experience and a network of relationships).
209 Furthermore, the detailed and rich data has provided a much more explicit discussion of these terms, and in
210 particular has drawn attention to the key role of additional services. The data suggests that convention bureau
211 competitiveness is underpinned by these determinants and this has resulted in the creation of the first model of
212 convention bureau competitiveness.

213 V.

214 5 Results

215 The twenty-five interviewees, all elite professionals and either professional conference organisers or senior
216 convention bureau staff, were asked to articulate the services provided by convention bureaus that they consider to
217 be integral to their effectiveness. The detailed responses confirm that a convention bureau's core resources include
218 being able to provide meeting planners with destination information and the opportunity to attend familiarisation
219 visits. It includes helping them to find suppliers in the destination and in particular liaising with the principal
220 venue and providing a delegate accommodation booking service. Core resources also includes providing staff to
221 promote the conference and support registration at the event. The results very much endorse Weber's (2000) list
222 of convention bureau services and can be used to annotate the determinant of 'core resources' on Volgger and
223 Pechlaner's model (2014).

224 Every participant also made reference to subvention, which is the provision of financial incentives such as a
225 venue discount, which is typically available to not for profit congresses and administered by a convention bureau.
226 Meeting planners discussed how they will generally ask for subvention, but not always receive it. As one planner
227 explained: "subvention is a great help. It's not something that's routinely offered I've noticed, it tends to be for

228 bigger events. I don't know that it makes a difference as to whether we will or won't go (to a destination) but
229 it's definitely a factor, it's nice to have rather than a decider, it's added value".

230 Similarly, some convention bureaus confirmed they offer subvention, while others do not. Those that do not
231 identified this as a barrier to winning bids with one bureau commenting: "it's very difficult to compete against
232 destinations that offer subvention. We've lost a lot of bids because of it". support for the process of securing
233 visas (e.g. for delegates and speakers) is rare but much sought after.

234 **6 Interviewees also discussed the significant issue of visa re-** 235 **quirements and how convention bureau**

236 One meeting planner described visa requirements as "a big issue" while another confirmed that:

237 "most countries have a visa problem, so if the convention bureau is there?fast tracking visas for the registered
238 delegates, fast tracking the immigration once they enter the city? these are very important things".

239 One planner stressed the importance of the convention bureau being able to accurately advise on visa
240 regulations, stating:

241 "otherwise what happens is people are groping about in the dark as the first time they're entering a country,
242 they have no clue. They go by what's on the internet, and many a time the internet is not right".

243 Four of the convention bureaus confirmed that they offer support with visa applications. One bureau in
244 Australasia has direct links to government departments to fast track visa applications which in terms of giving
245 them a competitive advantage, they described as making a "massive amount of difference" when bidding for
246 conventions. Another bureau in North America offer a comparable service, stating that this level of support is
247 something "only a destination can do, it can't be done by an individual hotel, it can't be done by a standalone
248 convention center, it really has to be from a destination". This once again suggests that offering support with
249 visas can give convention bureaus a competitive edge. Therefore, subvention and visa support are additional
250 services, not always available through the convention bureau, but nonetheless a distinct and valued resource. As
251 such, a model of convention bureau competitiveness could include core resources but also additional resources.

252 As anticipated, a convention bureau's ability to connect meeting planners with local venues and suppliers
253 was mentioned throughout the interviews. Additionally, both sets of participants discussed the importance of
254 a bureau being able to introduce planners to leading industry professionals and academics in the destination.
255 With one bureau confirming that having strong links with government and access to industry leaders "is key" to
256 winning bids for association conferences. Another European city convention bureau explained:

257 "We are very much part of that host partnership across the city and we work very closely with all of our
258 industry whether that be with venue X or with our universities. The package of support?the way we all work
259 together?makes it a very attractive destination to association meetings".

260 An Australasian city bureau commented that: "we have a very close collaboration with them (convention
261 center) which works well? What they (meeting planners) love to see is a very joined up approach within a city.
262 So rather than people operating in silos, it's operating in collaboration. It's very much appreciated that we can
263 make those introductions and facilitate those collaborations".

264 Similarly, five other convention bureaus cited their connections to business leaders and universities (for
265 potential keynote speakers) as a strength of their organisation. Furthermore, the head of one regional convention
266 bureau discussed his senior role in a local trade organisation gives him access to 330 organisations based around
267 the globe which he uses as a gateway to sourcing exhibitors and delegates for meeting planners. He described
268 this convention bureau service as: "unique to our destination because we are part of X (trade organisation) and
269 because I am the Executive Director".

270 Finally, the head of a North American city convention bureau indicated that having such relationships has
271 given them a competitive advantage, stating that their strategy to work with their government and develop
272 partnerships with leading businesses and academics in the destination put them "really ahead of the game in
273 terms of what other destinations were doing and now other destinations are starting to catch up". This all points
274 to the determinant of networking as being the convention bureau's ability to connect meeting planners with
275 venues, suppliers, business leaders and academics. It also confirms the importance of the bureau's connections
276 to government.

277 Finally, throughout the ensuing discussions with participants, many strong references to trust and experience
278 were discussed as being an integral component of the meeting planner/convention bureau relationship. One
279 bureau commented:

280 "we succeed by being able to empathise with a client, which is a much-overlooked aspect of the sector" While
281 another confirmed that they are not promoting any one venue or supplier and as such they see themselves as: "a
282 very unbiased, service orientated sales team".

283 One city bureau articulated this in detail, describing the organisation as: "a safe pair of hands. I think the
284 team are very established here. We're lucky that the average length of service for the city with our sales team
285 is about ten years so they're incredibly experienced". She also went on to say: "I think that there are some
286 conference organisers that have worked with convention bureaus and realise there is this realm of impartial advice
287 available, and they've had a good experience so they will always use a city bureau".

7 Another

288

European city bureau made comparative comments, describing their organisation as "a very well-oiled machine" later adding: "it's all about reliability and continuity?and my team has been here a long time".

289

Experience, as a part of why convention bureaus can be trusted, was also mentioned by national bureaus with one stating: "we've been in business for twenty-two years?we've done many, many, many events in the past so it's quite reassuring for the meeting planner". And a regional bureau adding:

291

"we're in our twentieth year which means we've been doing this a fair amount of time".

292

Meeting planners also discussed the importance of being able to trust an experienced bureau as this impacts client relations, with one confirming: "we will put forward a destination that we've worked with before (to clients) and had a good experience of. If they are a convention bureau owned by a council or similar, then you gain a bit more trust with them (clients)".

293

Another planner explained: "I would say that we almost exclusively involve convention bureaus because when it comes to associations, they like that reassurance that the city's behind it and it's a team effort".

294

Another planner commented on how a convention bureau will "handhold" their client, providing much needed reassurance during the planning of the congress. This was reiterated by the least experienced planner interviewed who explained that the last bureau she worked with provided "advice?understanding...and sort of just guided me and I can't explain how helpful that actually was". The data collected clearly illustrates that meeting planners value experienced convention bureaus and trust is an integral element of their relationship.

295

Therefore, the terms "trust" and "experience" merit an entry on a model of convention bureau competitiveness and succeed the comparatively unclear terms "transparency" and "professionalism" on Volgger and Pechlaner's (2014) conceptual model of DMO success.

296

The results of the interviews, and the subsequent analysis, has resulted in the creation of the first model of convention bureau competitiveness, as illustrated in figure 3. This conceptual model of convention bureau competitiveness represents a reworking of Volgger and Pechlaner's model, using more detailed terminology that can be applied to convention bureaus. This, the first model of convention bureau competitiveness demonstrates that there are four key elements of success: a network of relationships, core resources, additional services and trust and experience. The model is underpinned by Weber's (2000) list of convention bureau services, which are represented here in "core services". This is comparable with the term "resources" used by Volgger and Pechlaner (2014). The data collected in this investigation corroborates this literature which points to these various fundamental elements of convention bureau services as including providing destination information and an accommodation booking service, offering venue finding and referral services, organizing familiarization trips and staffing promotional events and delegate registration.

297

298

8 Global Journal of Management and Business Research

320

321 Volume XXI Issue I Version I Year 2021

9 ()

322

The "additional services" entry on the model represents the findings from the research which shows that the provision of subvention and support with visa applications are distinct elements of convention bureau support but can be considered to be additional rather than core services. They are clearly an element of support that meeting planners value but as they are not routinely expected or offered, they warrant a specific segment on the model.

323

The section of the model called "network of relationships" represents the results of the interviews which have clearly shown that a bureau's relationship with external agencies, notably business and academic leaders, are valued by meeting planners and are key to the competitive strategy of a number of convention bureaus operating around the world. The bureau's links to government, academics and industry leaders is significant. As such, the "network of relationships" section of the model takes into account a convention bureau's connections to all of these, individually named, external bodies.

324

Trust and experience is the final element of convention bureau competitiveness on the model. Most of the convention bureaus interviewed have all been in operation for more than twenty years and they all commented on their length of experience as a significant factor of why they are successful. It may be logically concluded that as the competition to host association conventions has intensified in recent years, these bureaus have drawn on their experience to remain competitive. It may be suggested that the entry on Vollger and Pechlaner (2014)'s model entitled "professionalism" is comparable to trust and experience. Although there is no discussion of this term in their work, or in that of Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan (2010), upon which their model is based, it may represent the importance of the bureau having experienced staff and being able to build a relationship with meeting planners based on trust. Finally, in line with Volgger and Pechlaner (2014)'s model, Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan's (2010) study, this new conceptual model of convention bureau competitiveness also reflects the strong interrelationship between bureau success and destination success.

325

Applying Treacy and Wiersema's (1995) theory of competitive advantage to the conceptual model of convention bureau competitiveness, it can be logically concluded that for a bureau to survive it must have a core competence (in this case core services) or a unique resource (in this case a network of relationships, additional services or

326

348 be trustworthy and have experience). In order to prosper, a bureau must excel in one area and match the
 349 competition in the other three. This suggests that a convention bureau could outperform the competition by,
 350 for example, offering subvention or visa support. Equally, a bureau that offers both could gain a competitive
 351 advantage by developing its relationships, particularly with government, business and academic leaders.

352 10 VI.

353 11 Summary

354 As destinations emerge from the global disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, convention bureaus will
 355 once again face increasing competition when bidding for international association conferences. To date there
 356 has been some scholarly investigations of destination competitiveness but very limited research exploring the
 357 closely related topic of convention bureau competitiveness. This paper provides a significant step forward in
 358 terms of progressing the academic narrative on the role of the CB in site selection. This new conceptual model of
 359 convention bureau competitiveness, which has emerged from the data collected through this qualitative enquiry,
 360 illustrates the application of Treacy and Wiersema's (1995) theory of competitive advantage within the context
 361 of the PCO/CB dynamic. The model is a tool that can be used to identify ways in which a convention bureau
 362 can gain a competitive advantage and it can be used to benchmark the performance of DMOs. Although ICCA
 363 rankings are widely used by convention bureaus to gauge and monitor destination performance, there is no
 364 such system in place to measure their own performance. This model of convention bureau competitiveness now
 365 facilitates this by providing DMOs with criteria by which they can assess their performance as well as that of
 366 their competitors. As such the model can also be used to guide capital investment in destinations and their
 367 management organisations and can be used to direct convention bureau operations and underpin future policy
 368 and strategy for destination management.

369 The limitation of this investigation is the small number of participants and there is certainly scope to continue to
 370 test and develop models of convention bureau, DMO and destination competitiveness. However, as this is the first
 371 model of its kind, it represents an initial synthesis of our collective knowledge of convention bureau competitiveness
 372 and represents a substantial development to the very underexplored area of destination management for business
 373 events. Furthermore, as convention bureaus re-establish their post-pandemic role in promoting their destination
 for face-to-face events, such new insight is potentially of great value and significance to academia and industry.

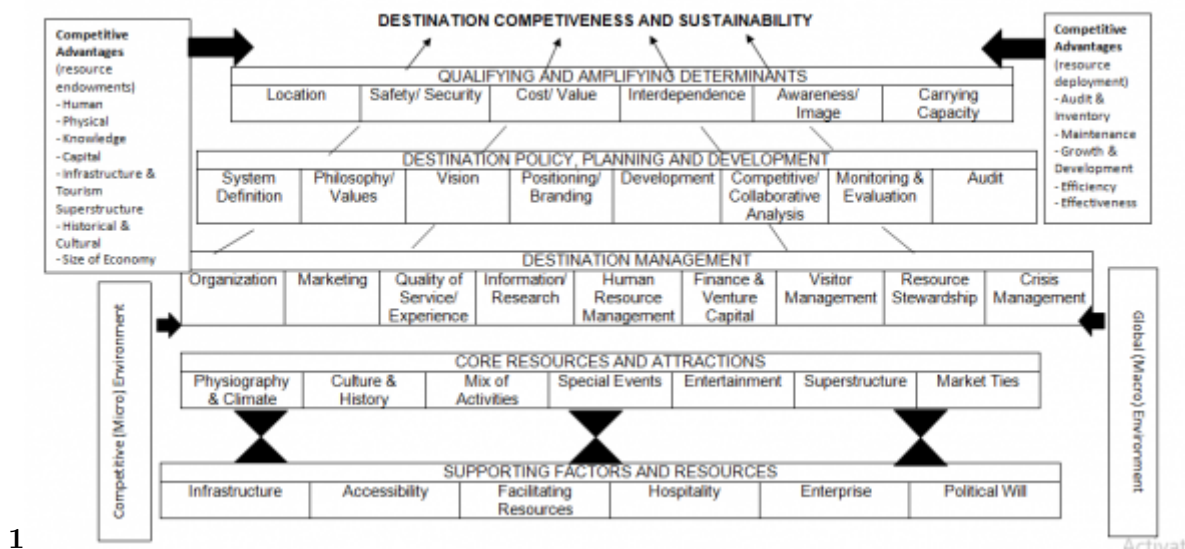
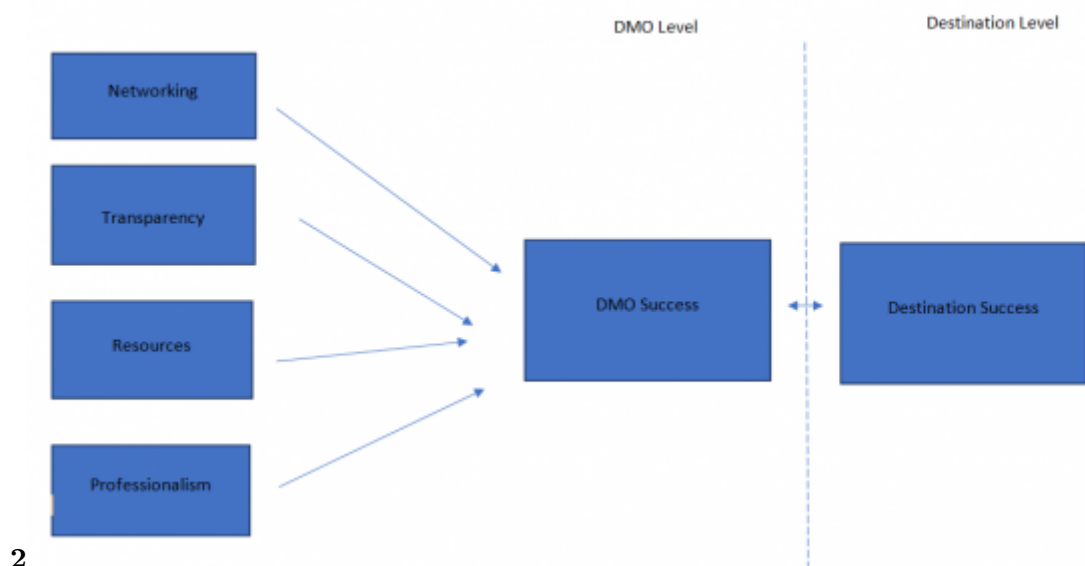


Figure 1: Figure 1 :

374 1 2
 375

¹Towards a Model of Convention Bureau Competitiveness

²© 2021 Global Journals © 2021 Global Journals



2

Figure 2: Figure 2 :

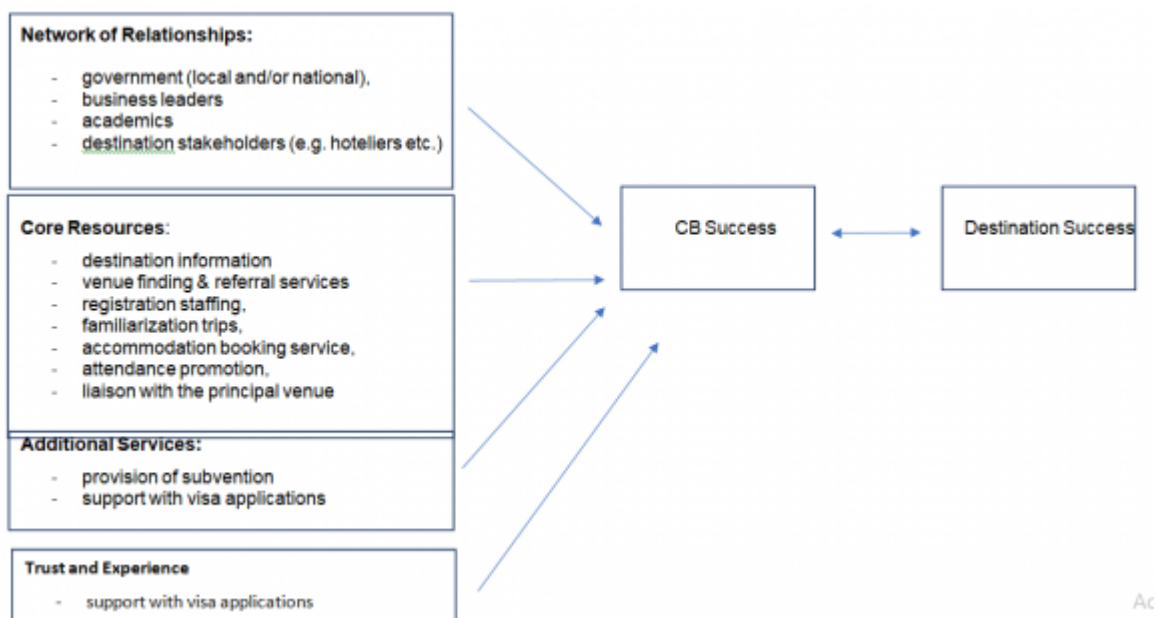


Figure 3: Global

- 376 [Guide] , Guide . London, UK: Routledge.
- 377 [Davidson (ed.) ()] , R Davidson . Events. 2 nd ed. London: Routledge (ed.) 2019.
- 378 [Reinhold et al. (2018)] *A business model typology for destination management organizations*, S Reinhold , P
379 Beritelli , R Grüning . 10.1108/TR-03-2017-0065. 2018. January 2020.
- 380 [Cameron (2018)] *A Report from the IMEX Policy Forum*, R Cameron . [https://www.the-iceberg.org/
381 research/11083/](https://www.the-iceberg.org/research/11083/) 2018. Accessed 26 March 2020.
- 382 [Zehrer and Hallmann ()] ‘A stakeholder perspective on policy indicators of destination competitiveness’. A
383 Zehrer , K Hallmann . *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management* 2015. 4 (2) p. .
- 384 [About Us Meeting Professionals International (2020)] ‘About Us’. [https://www.mpi.org/membership/
385 join](https://www.mpi.org/membership/join) *Meeting Professionals International*, August 2020. p. 12.
- 386 [Flick ()] *An introduction to qualitative research*, U Flick . 2006. London. (3rd edn)
- 387 [Caber et al. ()] ‘Analysis of congress destinations’ competitiveness using importance performance competitor
388 analysis’. M Caber , T Albayrak , T Ismay?ll? . *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism* 2017. p. .
- 389 [Jiang et al. ()] ‘Authenticity: The Link Between Destination Image and Place Attachment’. Y Jiang , H
390 Ramkissoon , F T Mavondo , S Feng . *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* 2016. 26 (2) p.
391 .
- 392 [Gillham ()] *Case study research methods*, B Gillham . 2000. London: Continuum.
- 393 [Yin ()] *Case study research: design and methods. 5th edn*, R K Yin . 2014. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- 394 [Rogers ()] *Conferences and conventions: a global industry*, T Rogers . 2013. (3rd ed. edn. London: Routledge)
- 395 [Oppermann and Chon ()] ‘Convention participation decision-making process’. M Oppermann , K.-S Chon .
396 *Annals of Tourism Research* 1997. 24 (1) p. .
- 397 [Nelson and Rys ()] ‘Convention Site Selection Criteria Relevant to Secondary Convention Destinations’. R
398 Nelson , S Rys . *Journal of Convention and Exhibition Management* 2000. 2 (2-3) p. .
- 399 [Crouch et al. ()] ‘Convention Site Selection Research’. G I Crouch , Ritchie , J R Brent . *Journal of Convention
400 and Exhibition Management* 1997. 1 (1) p. .
- 401 [Weber and Chon ()] *Convention tourism: international research and industry perspectives*, K Weber , K S Chon
402 . 2002. New York: Haworth Hospitality Press.
- 403 [Easton ()] *Critical realism in case study research*, G Easton . 2010. 39 p. . (Industrial Marketing Management)
- 404 [Crouch ()] ‘Destination Competitiveness: An Analysis of Determinant Attributes’. G I Crouch . *Journal of
405 Travel Research* 2011. 50 (1) p. .
- 406 [Dredge ()] ‘Does relevance matter in academic policy research?’. D Dredge . *Journal of Policy Research in
407 Tourism, Leisure and Events* 2014. 7 (2) p. .
- 408 [Russell (2021)] *EMEA Events Industry Poised for a Return to Face-to-Face Events in 2021. Available at: EMEA
409 Events Industry Poised for a Return to Face-to-Face Events in 2021 (pcma.org)* (Accessed, M Russell . 2021.
410 June 2021. 21.
- 411 [Raj et al. ()] *Events management: principles and practice*, R Raj , T Rashid , P Walters . 2013. (2nd ed. edn.
412 London: SAGE)
- 413 [Shin et al. ()] ‘Exploring determinants of meeting planners’ commitment to the business relationships with
414 destination management companies’. J T Shin , M Jeong , H Oh , E Tierney . *Journal of Convention and
415 Event Tourism* 2016. 18 (2) p. .
- 416 [Dwyer et al. ()] ‘Forecasting the Economic Impacts of Events and Conventions’. L Dwyer , R Mellor , N Mistilis
417 , T Mules . *Event Management* 2000. 6 p. .
- 418 [Gursoy et al. ()] D Gursoy , M Saayman , M Sotiriadis . *Collaboration in Tourism Businesses and Destinations:
419 a Handbook*, (Bingley, UK.) 2015. Emerald.
- 420 [Spiller ()] ‘History of Convention Tourism’. J Spiller . *Convention Tourism*, K Weber, K Chone (ed.) (New York)
421 2002. Haworth Hospitality Press.
- 422 [Chiappa ()] ‘How Do Meeting Organizers Choose Convention Sites Based on Different Types of Meetings? An
423 Empirical Analysis of the Italian Meetings Industry’. G D Chiappa . *Event Management* 2012. 16 (2) p. .
- 424 [Wood (2021)] *How the hospitality industry can get back on track in
425 2021*, S Wood . [https://www.conference-news.co.uk/blogs-world/
426 how-hospitality-industry-can-get-back-track-2021](https://www.conference-news.co.uk/blogs-world/how-hospitality-industry-can-get-back-track-2021) 2021. June 2021. p. 30.
- 427 [ICCA (2021) Vital signs: ICCA Europe Summit provides a post-pandemic checkup (2021)] *ICCA (2021) Vi-
428 tal signs: ICCA Europe Summit provides a post-pandemic checkup*, [https://www.iccaworld.org/
429 knowledge/knowledge-results.cfm?term=ICCA+statistics](https://www.iccaworld.org/knowledge/knowledge-results.cfm?term=ICCA+statistics) Accessed 30 June 2021. International
430 Congress and Convention Association.

11 SUMMARY

- 431 [Clark and Mcclary ()] ‘Influencing Associations’ Site-Selection Process’. J D Clark , K W Mcclary . *Cornell*
432 *Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 1995. 36 (2) p. .
- 433 [International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) (2015) ICCA Statistics Report. Available at (2021)]
434 <https://www.iccaworld.org/knowledge/knowledge-results.cfm?term=ICCA+statistics>
435 *International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) (2015) ICCA Statistics Report. Available at,*
436 June 2021. p. 28.
- 437 [Arksey and Knight ()] *Interviewing for social scientists: an introductory resource with examples*, H Arksey , P
438 T Knight . 1999. London: SAGE.
- 439 [Fenich and Bordelon ()] ‘Is There an Optimal Type of Ownership and Organizational Structure When Devel-
440 oping Convention and Entertainment Facilities?’. G G Fenich , B M Bordelon . *Journal of Convention and*
441 *Event Tourism* 2008. 9 (3) p. .
- 442 [Davidson and Rogers ()] *Marketing destinations and venues for conferences, conventions and business events.*
443 *2 nd edn*, R Davidson , T Rogers . 2016. London: Routledge.
- 444 [Weber ()] ‘Meeting planners’ use and evaluation of convention and visitor bureaus’. K Weber . *Tourism*
445 *Management* 2001. 22 p. .
- 446 [Porter ()] *Michael E. Porter on Competition and Strategy*, M E Porter . 1991. Boston: Harvard Business School.
- 447 [Aureli and Del Baldo ()] ‘Performance measurement in the networked context of convention and visitors bureaus
448 (CVBs)’. S Aureli , M Del Baldo . *Annals of Tourism Research* 2019. 75 p. .
- 449 [Surplice (2021)] *Post-Pandemic: What next for the Events industry? Centre for Brexit Studies Blog, Centre for*
450 *Brexit Studies*, P Surplice . <http://www.open-access.bcu.ac.uk/10744> 2021. June 2021.
- 451 [Pansiri ()] ‘Pragmatism: A methodological approach to researching strategic alliances in tourism’. J Pansiri .
452 *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development*, 2005. 2 p. .
- 453 [Getz and Page ()] ‘Progress and prospects for event tourism research’. D Getz , S J Page . *Tourism Management*
454 2016. 52 p. .
- 455 [Savin-Baden and Major ()] *Qualitative research: the essential guide to theory and practice*, M Savin-Baden , C
456 H Major . 2012. Abingdon: Routledge.
- 457 [Recovery Discovery Professional Convention Management Association (2020)] ‘Recovery Discovery’.
458 [https://www.pcma.org/recovery-discovery/?utm_medium=top-cta&utm_source=pcma_](https://www.pcma.org/recovery-discovery/?utm_medium=top-cta&utm_source=pcma_homepage&utm_campaign=Recov-Discov-20)
459 [homepage&utm_campaign=Recov-Discov-20](https://www.pcma.org/recovery-discovery/?utm_medium=top-cta&utm_source=pcma_homepage&utm_campaign=Recov-Discov-20) *Professional Convention Management Association* 2020.
460 August 2020. p. 15.
- 461 [Jago and Deery ()] ‘Relationships and Factors Influencing Convention Decision-Making’. L K Jago , M Deery .
462 *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism* 2005. 7 (1) p. .
- 463 [Volgger and Pechlaner ()] *Requirements for Destination Management Organizations in Destination Governance:*
464 *Understanding DMO Success’. Tourism Management, 41*, M Volgger , H Pechlaner . 2014. p. .
- 465 [Mccartney ()] ‘The CAT (Casino Tourism) and the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions):
466 Key Development Considerations for the Convention and Exhibition Industry in Macao’. G Mccartney .
467 *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism* 2008. 9 (4) p. .
- 468 [Saldaña ()] *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. 3 edn*, J Saldaña . 2016. London: Sage.
- 469 [Ritchie and Crouch ()] *The Competitive Destination: a Sustainable Tourism Perspective*, B R J Ritchie , G I
470 Crouch . 2003. Wallingford, UK: CABI.
- 471 [Crouch ()] ‘The Determinants of Convention Site Selection: A Logistic Choice Model from Experimental Data’.
472 G I L Crouch , J J . *Journal of Travel Research* 2004. 43 p. .
- 473 [Treacy and Wiersema ()] *The discipline of market leaders: choose your customers, narrow your focus, dominate*
474 *your market*, M Treacy , F D Wiersema . 1995. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.
- 475 [Park et al. ()] ‘The Great Halls of China? Meeting Planners’ Perceptions of Beijing as an International
476 Convention Destination’. J Park , B Wu , Y Shen , A M Morrison , Y Kong . *Journal of Convention*
477 *and Event Tourism* 2014. 15 (4) p. .
- 478 [Nolan ()] ‘The Supply and Design of Different Types of Venues for Business Events’. E Nolan . 10.1108/IJTC-
479 11-2019-0197. *International Journal of Tourism Cities* 2020.
- 480 [Lee et al. ()] ‘US DMOs and Meetings Planners, do they really ENGAGE with each other? Customer
481 engagement in the context of event industry’. J Lee , S-H Kim , B Kang . *Journal of Convention and*
482 *Event Tourism* 2019. p. .
- 483 [Nolan ()] *Working with Venues for Events*, E Nolan . 2018.