AN ANALYTIC HIERARCHY PROCESS (AHP) MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING CONVENTION PLANNERS' PRIOR FACTORS OF CONVENTION HOTEL SELECTION[*]

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ABSTRACT

In the process of organizing a convention, owners of conventions forward their requests to convention planners and leave the full organization of the event to convention planners. Therefore, convention planners perform all the purchases for the organization of a convention. Selecting the suitable convention hotel is a critical step for a successful convention, and for that reason, convention hotels should understand convention planners' preferences in order to have success in convention tourism. The aim of this study is therefore to determine the primary convention hotel selection criteria of convention planners operating in Ankara. The Delphi technique was used for the development of a data collection form. Data were gathered by conducting face to face interviews with managers from 13 travel agents in April, 2014. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was employed in the analysis of data. Findings indicate that facilities of the convention hotel, price, accessibility, site environment, and local support were clarified as the primary factors, respectively. Managerial implications for convention hotel managements are also discussed.

Keywords: Convention planners; travel agencies; convention hotel selection criteria; Analytic Hierarchy Process; Ankara-Turkey.

1. Introduction

"Convention" is defined as a "meeting of an invited group of domestic or non-domestic people with the same or different professions, who come together to exchange ideas and discuss (Eryılmaz, 2012; Emeksiz, 2010; Crouch and Ritchie, 1998). The word "convention" is also used for regular meetings (Baloğlu & Love, 2001). Convention tourism helps promote tourism throughout the whole year at a destination, and for that reason it has become one of the most effective types of tourism in increasing the efficiency and productivity of both tourism establishments and the national economy (Crouch & Richie, 1998). The participants of convention tourism usually prefer to visit different convention destinations and stay at totally new convention hotels and centers (Crouch and Ritchie, 1998; Crouch and Weber, 2002). This means that the market of convention centers and hotels, together with the convention destinations is growing more day by day.

The term "convention", used in the tourism sector, can be divided into three groups. These are called, national conferences, international conferences and international congresses (ICCA 2011). International congresses take place in the host country and the convention owner or a representative of the owner is present throughout the congress. The participants could be from the host country or from outside the country. At international congresses, both the owner and participants are from outside the host country. Frequently, this type of convention is the general assembly of professional associations, which take place in the host country (Ünsever, 2008). Generally, international conventions are organized in larger conference centers and the preparation requires multiple stages. At national conventions the owner of the convention is from the host country and all the participants are from the same country as well. Aksu, Yılmaz and Gümüş (2013) put forward another type of convention called virtual conventions. According to the authors, virtual conventions can be defined as a convention which is supported by a software program and allows participants to exchange information without any visa, or location and time limitations. Some other small-sized meetings which do not technically have the nature of conventions but carry the same features as meetings are also classified under the heading of convention. These kinds of small-sized conventions also expand the volume of convention tourism market.

According to International Congress and Convention Organization's (ICCA) figures, there has been 11,556 conventions organized around the world in 2012 (ICCA, 2011). The United States of America, Germany and Spain took the first three places in the number of conventions organized. Turkey was 21st with 179 international conventions organized in 2012. City-based evaluation demonstrated that Istanbul took the 9th place with 128 conventions, Antalya was the 109th with 21 conventions, and Ankara was 365th with five conventions. Other leading cities in terms of number of conventions organized are as follows: Vienna (195), Paris (181) and Berlin (172) in 2012.

The organization of a convention follows some specific steps. This process starts with the decision to organize a convention. Secondly, the owner of the convention charges the convention planner or cooperates with a local convention agent at the convention site. After that, the convention planner that has been charged to organize the convention performs the required purchases, makes the contracts with sponsors and offers the convention as a package product to the participants. Based on this explanation, the owner and the planner of the convention are the two main actors in organizing a convention. These two actor's positions differ in terms of their

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qualifications and responsibilities. The convention owner decides to organize the convention. This is a bit different in international conventions where the agent of the same organization in another country shares this title. The convention planner provides the "convention organization service" in the technical sense to the owner (ICCA, 2011). Another critical actor playing a role in convention organization is the convention hotel. Convention hotels are special purpose hotel establishments which provide meeting rooms equipped with the necessary equipment for different types of meetings (seminars, workshops, etc..) as well as accommodation services (Aksu, Yılmaz and Gümüş, 2013).

As mentioned above, owners of conventions forward their requests to convention planners and leave the full organization of the event to convention planners. Convention planners perform all the purchases for the organization of a convention. For that reason, there is tough competition among convention hotels, convention centers and convention destinations to be preferred by the convention planners. That is why being successful in convention tourism requires understanding convention planners' preferences and doing regular research on the subject. The aim of this study is therefore to determine the primary criteria of convention hotel selection of convention planners operating in Ankara. With the help of the AHP model used in this study, it will be possible to understand which features of convention hotels impress convention planners more than others and what other criteria affect a convention planners' decision about convention hotel selection. Besides, the findings of this study will also shed light on how to make the core product of convention hotels compatible with the demands of convention planners. In other words, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the alignment of supply and demand. The study is arranged as a descriptive study which compiled previous studies in the literature and determined the opinions of convention planners in terms of predefined factors and attributes.

2. Literature review

There has been much research done about the hotel and site selection criteria of conventions parallel to the recent developments in convention tourism. Crouch and Ritchie (1997) performed one of the pioneering studies on determining the site selection criteria of conventions. In this study, various parties in convention organization (convention owners, convention planners, business firms and participants etc.) were targeted and were asked about the factors to consider in convention site selection. Analysis of the collected data identified eight important criteria. These criteria were listed as accessibility, local support, extra-conference opportunities, accommodation facilities, meeting facilities, information, location of the environment and other criteria. This study was later referred to by other scientific research that was done to determine convention site selection criteria.

Opperman and Chon (1997) divided the site selection criteria of convention planners into two groups. These are organizational criteria and site-specific criteria. Among the former is the scope of the association (i.e. regional, national or international) which may predetermine the range of convention locations available to the organizers. Another factor is the influence of associations' CEOs or presidents, convention planners and other association members. On the other hand, site-specific criteria include conference and accommodation facilities, accessibility, price levels,

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service quality, destination image, safety/security, recreational and entertainment facilities, climate, and dining facilities.

In the beginning of the 2000s, some studies focused on the evaluation and scoring of selected destinations according to some specific criteria of convention organization. For instance, Chacko and Fenich (2000) tried to score selected destinations in terms of availability for convention tourism. In this study, seven states of the USA were evaluated in terms of convention site selection criteria. Twelve criteria were determined by analyzing the content of previous studies in the literature. These criteria are hotel room availability, hotel room rates, meeting space availability, the cost of food and beverage, availability of air service, the cost of air service, convenience of local transportation, promotional appeal of the city, destination services, and safety of attendees, friendliness of local people and helpfulness of service people. Seven states were scored according to these criteria and three of them were found to be superior to others in terms of all criteria. Also, the promotional appeal of the city was found to be the best determiner of being an attractive convention destination.

Baloğlu and Love (2001) focused on 23 criteria for association meeting planners' perceptions and tried to determine the performance of five major convention cities in the USA with regard to these criteria. Some of the criteria are as follows: capacity of meeting facilities, quality of meeting facilities, safety and security of destination, accessibility of destination, hotel room capacity, city's reputation and climate. As a result of interviews with 16 planners, more and less significant criteria were determined together with the best performing city.

Moser (2003) examined the change in convention planners' and participants' expectations of site selection. Moser tried to determine the leading criteria used in convention planners' and participants' decision making process and also tried to specify the methods used in ordering these criteria. Criteria used in the studies of Crouch and Weber (2002), Crouch and Ritchie (1998), Gess (1975) and Oppermann and Chon (1997) provided guidance in gathering the site selection criteria. Some of these criteria are accessibility, local support, extra conference opportunities, and accommodation facilities, meeting facilities, information, site environment and other criteria. Findings of the study showed that accessibility was found to be the most significant site selection criteria and a face-to-face interview was found to be the most effective method for determining the relative significance of various criteria. In another study Getz (2004) classified the convention site selection criteria mentioned in previous studies under 10 headings. These headings are accessibility, supply of event venues, accommodations, amenities, image as a desirable place to visit, reputation for hosting successful events, safety and comfort of visitors, support services to events, number and type of local organizations and business and cost.

Chen (2006) conducted a study in which the aim was to propose an Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) model to construct an evaluation structure with criteria and associated weights of convention site selection for meeting planners. As a result of a detailed literature review, five main criteria and 17 sub-criteria were identified for convention site selection and a data collection form was developed. The main criteria were meeting and accommodation facilities, costs, site environment, local support and extra conference opportunities. A three-level hierarchical structure was performed according to the responses of 35 academic-related association directors who hosted international conventions in 2003 in Taiwan. According to the findings of

the study, meeting and accommodation facilities and site environment were found to be much more significant compared to other criteria. In a study conducted by Amiri, Zandieh, Vahdani, Yazdani and Soltani (2008), the authors tried to prove the benefits of using a hybrid model in decision-making and classified the convention site selection criteria under five main headings which are meeting and accommodation facilities, cost, site environment, local support and extra conference opportunities. Various sub-criteria were specified for each group of main criteria.

While these previous studies identified site selection criteria, some other studies tried to analyze the differences between convention planners' perceptions of convention site selection criteria in terms of the significance they attributed to these criteria. DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf and Godlewska (2008) examined whether there was a significant difference between perceptions of members of three event planning associations regarding destination selection criteria. The criteria used in this research were selected based on past research done on the topic of destination selection criteria. Differences between the responses of 209 planners were analyzed. While some criteria were rated at different significance by convention planners; perceived value for money, overall cost, support services for events, reputation for hosting successful events, and desirable destination image were found to be important by all respondent groups.

There have also been some studies carried out in Turkey. For instance, Dölalan (2008) aimed to evaluate Ankara as a convention destination and determine the position of Ankara in terms of convention tourism. Perceptions of 98 officials from several travel agencies were measured in this study. Findings showed that development of convention tourism in Ankara is not at an adequate level. Besides, Ankara does not have the required amount of convention and accommodation facilities, urban transportation facilities and sufficient coordination between related foundations. In a dissertation study, Boz (2010) tried to determine which hotel selection criteria travel agencies in Istanbul take into account when they plan conventions. 44 officials were surveyed via questionnaires and were asked to rate 28 criteria with regard to the importance they attributed to each. Results from this study revealed that price, star classification, food and beverage quality, convention center, housekeeping services, on time food and beverage services, small and adaptable meeting rooms, and qualified hotel staff were found to be among the most important criteria.

While several studies highlighted the broad groups of selection criteria, subsequent studies have focused on more detailed sub-criteria. For instance, in a study conducted by Nelson and Rys (2008), convention site selection preferences of 1272 association executives were surveyed. 31 detailed convention site selection criteria were listed in terms of their importance, some of which are as follows: cooperative convention staff, competitive rates for exhibit space, hotel rooms within walking distance, affordability of city, convenient ground transport, friendliness of locals, airport-direct flights, reputation of restaurants, good shopping opportunities, availability of quality golf course, quality/variety of night-life, quality museums, availability of water sports and availability of casino gambling. Likewise, Chiappa (2012) focused on Australian convention planners and asked the respondents to assess the importance they give to each of the 22 site-specific attributes when selecting a site. For example, Chiappa addressed accommodation under six different sub-criteria, which include accommodation range, accommodation rates, accommodation facilities, accommodation location relative to airport, on-site/off site accommodations and

number of hotels within walking distance to convention center. Expected weather, Convention and Visitor Bureau's assistance and quality and efficiency of industry personnel were some other noticeable criteria used in this study.

Recent studies have also tried to make a collective assessment of studies about convention site selection criteria. This may be taken as an indicator of satisfaction of literature in terms of knowledge on convention site selection. For instance, Elston and Draper (2012) aimed to review empirical studies, conducted between the years 1990-2012, regarding the site selection process of meeting planners. The study also aimed to find out the relatively more and less important criteria of convention site selection. The results revealed that since 1990, cost of hotel rooms, meeting space, food and beverage, and other costs have consistently been important criteria. On the other hand, the most common least important criteria in the series of articles appeared to be the provision of entertainment (e.g., resort activities, nightlife, museums). Likewise, Mair (2012) made a content analysis of studies conducted between the years of 2000-2009 on the topics of meetings, conventions, incentive travel, trade fairs and exhibitions. One of the themes determined in this study is site selection. Findings of the study revealed that a considerable amount of research in the period from 2000 to 2009 focused on the evaluation of satisfaction by meeting planners, the role of destination image in convention attendance, and the decision-making process of convention participants. Also, Mair (2012) emphasized that the site selection process of conference and convention organizers emerged as important research topics among the literature of business events.

In summary, literature on the site-selection process demonstrated that a large amount of research has been conducted on event planners and site selection crieria. Convention and meeting planners have become the key actors of the convention tourism market and their demands and requirements should be listened to carefully. There is nevertheless a relatively neglected area of tourism research as no scientific study has encompassed the hotel selection criteria of specialist convention planners operating in Ankara, Turkey, who are organizing both national and international conventions all over the world. However, this information may be of importance in terms of shedding light on convention hotel selection criteria that convention planners take into account while planning international conventions. The aim of this present study is therefore to determine the importance rank order of convention hotel selection criteria of national and international convention planners operating in Ankara, Turkey.

The reasons for conducting this study in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, are twofold. First, Ankara is the center of national and international political traffic in Turkey. Secondly, Ankara has a huge potential for convention tourism. The presence of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara, and the presence of the ministries, public institutions, banks, educational and medical institutions, foundations, rooms, associations, and political parties all contribute to increase the demand for convention organization. Also, national and international conventions, seminars, conferences, workshops, plenaries and scientific meetings organized by these institutions provide a potential demand for convention tourism (Dölalan, 2008). On the supply side, it is also noticeable that the total capacity of meeting rooms found in certified tourism businesses and public and civil society organizations in Ankara exceeds 60,000. Ankara is also convenient for sufficiently meeting the accommodation requirements of convention participants. As of the end of 2013, the total number of ministry and municipality certified hotels in Ankara had reached 328.

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The total bed capacity of those hotels is up to 30,870 (Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate in Ankara, 2014).

3. Research Design

The aim of this study is to determine the importance rank order of convention hotel selection criteria of national and international convention planners operating in Ankara, Turkey. Thus, it will be easier to understand which criteria affect convention planners' final decision about convention hotel selection more than others. Besides, ranking these criteria with regard to their importance level will give convention hotels some clues on how to align their product presentation with the demands of convention planners.

3.1. Development of data collection form

The Delphi technique was used for the development of a data collection form. The Delphi technique is a widely used and accepted method for gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise. The technique is designed as a group communication process which aims to achieve a convergence of opinion on a specific real-world issue. The Delphi process has been used in various fields of study such as program planning, needs assessment, policy determination, and resource utilization to develop a full range of alternatives, explore or expose underlying assumptions, as well as correlate judgments on a topic spanning a wide range of disciplines. The Delphi technique is well suited as a method for consensus-building by using a series of questionnaires delivered using multiple iterations to collect data from a panel of selected subjects. Subject selection, time frames for conducting and completing a study, the possibility of low response rates, and unintentionally guiding feedback from the respondent group are areas which should be considered when designing and implementing a Delphi study (Hsu and Sandford, 2007).

First, factors and criteria used in previous studies about convention hotel selection criteria of convention planners were derived after a thorough examination of the literature. Then, experts were asked to associate those predefined criteria for inclusion in each of the factors. The factors and criteria used in this study were derived from the studies of Crouch and Ritchie (1997), Opperman and Chon (1997), Clark, Evans and Knutson (1998), Chacko and Fenich (2000), Upchurch, Jeong, Clements and Jung (2000), Baloğlu and Love (2001), Crouch and Louviere (2004), Getz (2004), Chen (2006), Fawzy and Samra (2008), Amiri, Zandieh, Vahdani, Yazdani and Soltani (2008), DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf, Godlewska (2008), Nelson and Rys (2000), Tsai and Ho (2009), Jeon and Kim (2011) and Chiappa (2012). The Delphi technique was performed in three stages and in each of these stages 15 experts were employed. The experts consulted in this study included five academicians, five hotel managers and a total of five other experts from the fields of public relations, food and beverage, travel agency and event management.

The first round of the Delphi technique was started with eight factors and 41 criteria. After the completion of this first round, some criteria on which experts could not reach consensus and those which were regarded as unimportant or were not fully understood were excluded from the list. Besides, it was noticed that some factors were associated with none of the criteria and thus the number of the factors was also reduced. At the beginning of the second round of the Delphi technique, five factors and 34 criteria were present in the data collection form. At the end of this round, 12

more criteria which were associated with none of the factors, because they are too comprehensive, were excluded from the list. In the third and last round, experts came to an agreement on the factors and criteria. More specifically, 22 criteria and five factors associated with these criteria were determined and a data collection form took its final shape. The convention hotel selection hierarchy can be seen in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, the three level hierarchy of convention hotel selection consists of five factors, which are facilities of convention hotel, accessibility, site environment, price and local support. The main goal of the hierarchy is to determine the primary criteria of convention hotel selection of convention planners operating in Ankara. The first factor, facilities of convention hotel, has four criteria. These are listed as technological infrastructure, exhibit space wihout pillars, safety and security, and number of meeting rooms. Accessibility, the second factor, can be explained with four criteria, which are distance, airline transportation, frequency of transportation to the region, and roper highways to the region. Site environment is another factor in the hierarchy. This factor has six criteria which include climate, destination image, sightseeing opportunities in the region, service quality of hotels in the region, service quality of restaurants in the region, and room capacity of hotels in the region. The fourth factor is price. Four criteria are employed to explain the price factor. These are transportation cost, food and beverage prices in the region, accommodation prices in the region, and prices of meeting rooms of hotels in the region. Finally, the fifth factor in the hierarchy is local support. This factor consists of support of nongovernmental institutions, support of local government, attitude of citizens towards tourism, and tourist infos in the region.

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Table 1
The hierarchy of convention hotel selection

Convention Hotel Selection				
Facilities of Convention Hotel	Accessibility	Site environment	Price	Local Support
Technological infrastructure	Distance	Climate	Transportation cost	Support of nongovernmental institutions
Exhibit space without pillars	Airline transportation	Destination image	Food and beverage prices in the region	Support of local government
Safety and security	Frequency of transportation to the region	Sightseeing opportunities in the region	Accommodation prices in the region	Attitude of citizens towards tourism
Number of meeting rooms	Proper highways to the region	Service quality of hotels in the region	Prices of meeting rooms of hotels in the region	Tourist infos in the region
		Service quality of restaurants in the region		
		Room capacity of hotels in the region		

3.2. Sample and data collection
Turkish Regulation of Travel Agents became influential in the determination of the target population of this study. More specifically, convention planners in Turkey have to be travel agents in accordance with Article 4/Paragraph E of Turkish Regulation of Travel Agents. A travel agent may undertake a stand-alone organization or more than one travel agency may come together with cooperation agreements and operate under the title of convention planner. For that reason, managers of A class travel agencies operating in Ankara formed the accessible sample of this study. According to the 2013 statistics obtained from The Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, the total number of A class travel agents in Ankara is 76. The authors conducted preliminary telephone interviews with officials from those travel agents and discovered that 40 of these travel agents dealt with the operation of convention organization.

Data were collected with face-to-face interviews. Travel agencies were telephoned in advance and appoinments were made for interviews. Then, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the managers of 13 travel agents in April, 2014. Respondents were asked to make pairwise comparisons about the relative importance of convention hotel selection factors and criteria, respectively. The 9-point intensity of Saaty's relative importance scale (1980) was used while making this comparison (Table 2). The interviewers explained the procedure for filling out the questionnaire to respondents and clarified points that were not understood, and this contributed to gathering complete and consistent data from the respondents.

Table 2
9-Point intensity of relative importance scale

Intensity of Relative Importance	Definition	Explanation
1	Equal importance	Two activities contribute equally to objective 1.
3	Moderate importance of one over another	Experience and judgment slightly favor one activity over another
5	Essential or strong importance	Experience and judgment strongly favor one activity over another
7	Demonstrated importance	An activity is strongly favored, and its dominance is demonstrated in practice
9	Extreme importance	The evidence favoring one activity over another is of the highest possible order of affirmation
2, 4, 6, 8	Intermediate values between the two adjacent judgments	When a compromise is needed

Source: Adapted from Saaty (1980)

3.3. Data analysis

One of the questionnaires was excluded from the data analysis since it was perfunctorily filled out and included so many missing values. For that reason, 12 questionnaires were used for further analysis. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was employed in the analysis of the data. The Analytic Hierarchy Process is a general theory of measurement. It is used to derive ratio scales from both discrete and continuous paired comparisons. These comparisons may be taken from actual measurements or from a fundamental scale which reflects the relative strength of preferences and feelings. The AHP has a special concern with departure from consistency, its measurement on and dependence within and between the groups of elements of its structure. It has found its widest applications in multicriteria decision making, planning and resource allocation and in conflict resolution (Saaty, 1987). In its general form, the AHP is a nonlinear framework for carrying out both deductive and inductive thinking without use of the syllogism by taking several factors into consideration simultaneously and allowing for dependence and for feedback, and making numerical tradeoffs to arrive at a synthesis or conclusion. T. L. Saaty developed the AHP in 1971-1975 while at the Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA). Ku and Fan (2009) also explain the AHP method as

using the pairwise comparison method to rank order the criteria and alternatives of a problem which are formulated in hierarchical structure (Ku and Fan, 2009).

Before the analysis of the data, the consistency of each respondent was analyzed with the help of Expert Choice software. The consistency ratios for all the answers of the 12 respondents resulted in acceptable values below 0.10 (Saaty, 1980). So, data analysis was carried out on 12 consistent questionaires. To obtain an aggregate measure of the pairwise comparisons of all managers involved in this study, the geometric mean of the individual assessments was used (Chen, 2006). Geometric means of the answers of 12 respondents were calculated with the help of Excel software.

4. Findings

Table 3 summarizes the consistency tests for convention hotel selection factors. As suggested by Saaty (1980), if the consistency ratio is smaller than 0.10, then the comparisons are acceptable. As shown in the table, the group consistency ratio was found to be 0.01, which indicates an acceptable group judgement. Additionally, calculation of consistency ratios of five factors resulted in acceptable values below 0.10 (Table 3).

Table 3
Consistency tests for convention hotel selection factors

Level	Consistency Ratio	Consistency Test
Goal	0.01	Accepted
Factors	0.01	Accepted
Facilities of convention hotel	0.00	Accepted
Accessibility	0.01	Accepted
Site environment	0.00	Accepted
Price	0.04	Accepted
Local support	0.02	Accepted

The data obtained as a result of the binary comparison of the factors and criteria are given in Table 4. As seen in this table, according to respondents, the most important selection criteria is meeting facilities of convention hotel (0,365). Other criteria are as follows; price (0,333), accesibility (0,164), site environment (0,088) and local support (0,050) based on their perceived importance. The importance rankings of each criterion under the factors have also been calculated separately with the help of a software package. For instance, when we examine the criteria of facilities of convention hotels, the most important criteria is the technological infrastucture of the convention hotel (0,318). Exhibit space without pillars (0.295) and number of meeting rooms (0,295) have emerged as two other criteria which are of equal importance. Within this group, the least important criterion was found to be the safety and security of the convention hotel (0,034).

According to the respondents, the most important criterion within the price factor is accomodation prices in the region (0.433). This was followed by the prices of the meeting rooms of convention hotels (0.350), transportation cost (0.125) and food and beverage prices in the region (0.093). In terms of accessibility, airline transportation (0.526) was seen as much more important than the rest of criteria. Frequency of

transportation to the region (0.204), distance (0.183) and proper highways to the region (0.087) shared the second, third and fourth places, respectively.

Table 4
Local weight and global weight for each criteria in convention hotel selection

Factors	Local Weights[†]	Criteria	Local Weights	Global Weights[‡]	Ranking
Facilities of Convention Hotel	0.365	Technological infrastructure	0.318	0.116	1
		Exhibit space without pillars	0.295	0.108	2-3
		Safety and security	0.092	0.034	7
		Number of meeting rooms	0.295	0.108	2-3
Accessibility	0.164	Distance	0.183	0.030	12
		Airline transportation	0.526	0.086	6
		Frequency of transportation to the region	0.204	0.034	11
		Proper highways to the region	0.087	0.014	17
Site environment	0.088	Climate	0.073	0.006	20
		Destination image	0.157	0.014	16
		Sightseeing opportunities in the region	0.075	0.007	18-19
		Service quality of hotels in the region	0.413	0.036	9
		Service quality of restaurants in the region	0.075	0.007	18-19
		Room capacity of hotels in the region	0.206	0.018	14
Local Support	0.050	Support of nongovernmental institutions	0.464	0.023	13
		Support of local government	0.304	0.015	15
		Attitude of citizens towards tourism	0.121	0.006	21
		Tourist infos in the region	0.111	0.006	22
Price	0.333	Transportation cost	0.125	0.042	8
		Food and beverage prices in the region	0.093	0.031	10
		Accomodation prices in the region	0.433	0.144	4
		Prices of meeting rooms of hotels in the region	0.350	0.116	5

When evaluated in terms of the convention hotels' site environment, service quality of hotels in the region (0.413) was determined to be the most important criteria. Room capacity of hotels in the region (0.206) is the second most important criteria, which is followed by destination image (0.157) in third place. Sightseeing

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[†] Local weight is derived from judgment with respect to a single criterion
[‡] Global weight is derived from multiplication by the weight of the criteria

opportunities in the region (0.075) and service quality of restaurants in the region (0.075) are of equal importance and share the fourth place. In this group the criterion, climate (0.073) was regarded as the least important. As determined by respondents of this study, local support is the least important factor for convention hotel selection. Within this factor, support of nongovernmental institutions to the convention (0.464) and support of local government (0.304) were seen as slightly more important whereas attitude of citizens towards tourism (0.121) and tourist infos in the region (0.111) were regarded as relatively unimportant.

5. Conclusion and managerial implications

The analysis of the data compiled from convention planners operating in Ankara demonstrated the primary factors and criteria these planners take into account while deciding on which convention hotel to choose. According to the results obtained with the help of the AHP, facilities of the convention hotel, price, accessibility, site environment, and local support were clarified as the primary factors, respectively.

The results indicate that convention planners in Ankara primarily pay attention to the unique facilities of convention hotels whereas site environment of hotels and local support in the region stay in the background. Based on these results, it should be remarked that convention planners primarily focus on selection criteria which are particular to the characteristics of convention hotels while planning a convention. Namely, technological infrastructure of convention hotels, exhibit space without pillars, number of meeting rooms of convention hotels and issues of safety and security stand out among other criteria. The result is compatible with the results of previous studies in the literature, as well. Chen (2006) identified the meeting and accommodation facilities as the second most important criteria among convention site selection criteria. Admittedly, this approach of convention planners puts a big burden on convention hotel management since convention planners' expectations from convention hotels will also be very high. For this reason, convention hotels should do their best to meet the needs and wants of convention planners in terms of convention facilities.

Results of this study indicate that, price is the second most important factor taken into consideration while planning a convention. This supports the results obtained by Boz (2010) and Elston and Draper (2012). The fact that convention planners attach such a degree of importance to price can be interpreted as they are preoccupied with keeping the costs low and they consider the potential sensitivity of convention participants to price. Consequently, it may be inferred that large capacity hotels, which make bulk purchases and keep the costs low, will benefit from this situation since they have the opportunity to offer lower prices for convention planners. However, convention hotels should never compromise on quality in order to keep prices low.

Accessibility has been identified as the third most important factor by convention planners operating in Ankara. Thus, it can be said that, accessibility is also taken into account by the convention planners while planning a convention. As a matter of fact, accessibility was indentified in many of the previous studies on convention tourism and in some of these studies (Moser, 2003), this criteria was seen as a priority by respondents. The present study, in which accessibility was found the be the third criteria in importance after meeting facilities and price, shows that convention planners prefer hotels which are located relatively nearby, can be reached by air

transportation and where the time cost of transportation is low. For example, convention hotels should be located in destinations such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Antalya since they have the advantage of having proper highways and convenient airline transportation.

It is also interesting that site environment of the convention hotel is less important according to convention planners, when compared to the first three factors. In other words, the exterior features of the convention hotels such as sight-seeing opportunities in the region, image, climate and service qualities of the hotels in the region almost do not affect the hotel selection of convention planners. This finding contradicts the fact that, nowadays sightseeing tours are highly demanded by convention participants and these tours accompany the convention programs at the expiry date of the convention. Nevertheless, conclusions reached by previous studies in the literature support the conclusions of this present study. For instance, Elston and Draper (2012) examined the results of the empirical studies dealing with site selection process of convention planners, published between the years of 1990 and 2012. The authors noted that recreational facilities and opportunities of the convention site were often seen as the most trivial common criteria. On the other hand, convention planners might have been involved in making this decision because convention participants do not frequently need to get out of hotels that have all inclusive systems, or participants have very limited time to spend with specific convention activities only. Future research conducted on convention participants may be helpful in order to understand whether the relative unimportance of site environment is derived from a convention planners' nature of performing their business or preferences of convention participants. Still, the authors of this study are not exaggerating when they claim that "tourism due to congress" is a more popular market trend in Turkey rather than "congress with tourism purposes".

Another relatively less important criterion was determined as local support in the region. In contrast, an examination of the studies in the literature showed that local support is an important criterion. As an example, Wan (2011) expressed that the support of local people and associations to the convention and meeting sector is a strong aspect in Macao which is located on the southern coast of China. Similarly, Chacko and Fenich (2000) determined that hospitality of local people is one of the leading conditions of being a convention destination for San Antonio, USA. In this study conducted in Ankara, Turkey, it can be inferred that convention planners see local support as one of the least important factors just because convention planners in Ankara operate in an introverted structure and they do not fully need the local support in the region.

It should be stated that results obtained in this study are limited to the opinions of convention planners operating in Ankara. However, future research may be carried out on all the convention planners operating in Turkey so that it may be feasible to provide a map of convention tourism in Turkey from the point of view of convention planners. In addition, an assessment of these results with those obtained from other capital cities in the world will enable a comparative interpretation. Also, an examination of whether the importance rank order of convention hotel selection factors and criteria vary according to the convention's being national or international may provide useful tips for identification of priorities for conventions in different spheres.

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