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Micro-impacts and Benefits of Business Tourism in Malaysia: A Case Study of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

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Abstract: The objective of the current study is to highlight the micro areas of delegate spending and their experiences specifically in the case of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (The Centre), Malaysia. The study operationally defined business tourism as 'travel-related activities and expenditures of business tourists attending international MICE-related events' at The Centre either as local or foreign participants. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used. On-site surveys were conducted during five (5) MICE-related events in 2011 (May to November 2011) with non-probability convenience sampling technique. A total of 950 survey questionnaires were collected; however, only 809 surveys were found to be useful, representing a response rate of 85.15%. The majority of the respondents comprised of foreigners from 154 cities and 76 countries all around the world. The respondents stayed on average 3–5 days spending a minimum of US\$3,200. The findings revealed that the respondents had high perception regarding The Centre facilities and services although they had low perceptions for airlines, hotel accommodation, local transportation, restaurants and entertainment/activities. Some notable concerns raised by the respondents are further discussed in the findings and conclusion of the study, complete with recommendations.

Key words: Micro-impacts, benefits, business tourism, Malaysia

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Introduction

The Glossary of Terms by the United Nations-World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has no specific definition for business tourism. Literature on business tourism describes it according to its scope of business activities in relation to tourism. For example, Haven, Jones and Webb (2007) mentioned that business tourism consists of all the trips related to a traveller's employment or business interest, such as conferences and meetings, exhibitions, trade fairs, and corporate hospitality events. Similarly, Hankinson (2005) also defined business tourism as travel associated with attendance at meetings, conferences, exhibitions and incentive events.

Some countries describe business tourism in relation to their existing practices. According to Tourism Research Australia (2011), business tourism is any business that relies significantly on tourists including both direct and indirect consumption of the main product or service of the business. On the other hand, the Northern Ireland Tourism Board (2011) defined business tourist as a traveller whose main purpose for travelling is to attend an activity or event associated with his/her business of interest. It further added that the main components of business tourism include conferences, exhibitions and trade fairs, incentive travel, corporate events and meetings.

The concepts previously cited are very important in explaining why UNWTO does not consider it as solely business tourism industry but instead classified it as meetings industry. UNWTO refers a trip as part of meeting industry if the nature of the trip is business/professional which includes attending meetings, conferences, congresses, trade fairs and exhibitions and other business and professional activities. According to UNWTO, the term meeting industry is preferred by International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and Reed Travel over the acronym MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) which does not recognise the industrial nature of such business.

Another interesting concept of business tourism can be derived from Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) of UNWTO. A briefing paper prepared by McNicoll

(2004) on *Issues Arising Concerning the Treatment of Business Tourism in a UK Tourism Satellite Account* pointed out two perspectives from the demand and supply side. From a demand perspective, business tourism is generally defined as “expenditures made by or for an individual associated with a visit which satisfies the criteria to be defined as a business tourism trip”. The paper also mentioned that TSA literature gives little (if any) consideration to a supply-oriented definition of business tourism. The supply-side of business tourism emphasises the range and volume of activities and commodities produced and supplied specifically for business tourism purposes.

There are some issues as to which perspective should be used for measurement purposes. Han and Fang (1997) explained some of these demand and supply side issues in measuring tourism contributions to the economy. The paper concluded that to correctly estimate tourism’s contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the business tourism demand should be utilised. This concept avoids double counting and hence, is comparable with GDP. Additionally, this method worked out consistent estimates for both the size of tourism and its contribution.

The current study derived its concept of business tourism from literature review. The business tourism in the study refers to ‘travel-related activities and expenditures of business tourists attending international MICE-related events’ at The Centre either as local or foreign participants. These travel activities refer to MICE-related events such as conferences, congresses, meetings and exhibitions. Similarly, travel expenditures refer to the amount of money spent on travel-related activities such as transportation, hotel/accommodation, food and beverage, shopping and entertainment. Based on this framework, the current study examines the micro-impacts and benefits of tourism business in Malaysia. Specifically, it aims to analyse spending patterns and experiences of business tourists in relation to travel-related activities. The study focused on five (5) international MICE-related events held in The Centre in 2011 with local (Malaysians) and foreign delegates making up the respondents.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the micro-impacts and benefits of business tourism in Malaysia. The objective of the study is to highlight the micro areas of delegate spending and their experiences specifically in the case of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Literature Review

The Case of Malaysia

According to UNWTO (2013) statistics, Malaysia’s global tourism has grown from RM30 billion in 2004 to RM60 billion in 2012 with 12% growth rate from 2004-2012 placing Malaysia 10th in terms of global tourist arrival. Despite this strong

historical growth, the tourism sector has been predominantly dependent on growth in the number of arrivals rather than on yield per tourist. According to a Malaysian Government Report (Economic Transformation Program, 2010), although mass tourism arrivals contribute to tourism income, its yield per tourist in Malaysia is relatively low at RM2,260 as compared to RM3,106 in Singapore and RM3,785 in Thailand. The reasons given for such a trend was the lower average length of stay, lower average spending per day and dependence on arrivals from short-haul markets.

Business tourism is considered as the sector that yields a higher yield in the overall tourism industry. In fact, it is not only the most lucrative but also, the most competitive. Based on this, Malaysia placed business tourism as one of its 12 Entry Point Projects (EPPs) under the proposed Tourism National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) (ETP, 2013) by the year 2020. Under this NKEA, there are 5 themes and 12 high-impact projects identified. Business tourism falls under the last theme and it has three EPPs, namely, EPP10: Establishing Malaysia as a leading business tourism destination; EPP11: Enhancing connectivity to priority medium-haul markets; and EPP12: Improving rates, mix and quality of hotels.

This study focuses on EPP10 (Establishing Malaysia as a leading business tourism destination) because of its relevance to the objectives of the study. The main purpose of this paper is to examine the micro-impacts and benefits of business tourism in Malaysia among local and foreign business tourists who are in the country for a MICE-related activity. The Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) is the government agency responsible for coordinating various MICE organisations. MyCEB works hand in hand with the private sectors whose business tourism activities aim to attract foreign organisations to conduct their activities in Malaysia. The Tourism NKEA specifically targets business tourism to contribute RM3.9 billion in incremental Gross National Income (GNI) and 16,700 jobs to the nation by the year 2020.

In order to achieve these targets, the Malaysian government through MyCEB has allotted an initial RM50 million funding for the business tourism sector of which RM25 million will be allocated for subvention programs. This program supports bids for targeted international business events which offer a high economic value to the nation. This will also hopefully maintain or better still, improve its ranking with ICCA whereby in 2012, KL, Malaysia was placed 31st worldwide and 8th in Asia-Pacific and Middle East as one of the top choice for MICE-related activities (Table 1). This support from MyCEB will help uncover the best that Malaysia has to offer to foreign business tourists. Recently, KLCC won the ICCA Best PR Award at the 52nd ICCA Congress 2013 held in Shanghai, China.

Table 1. Number of meetings and ICCA ranking for Kuala Lumpur, 2007–2012

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No of meetings	66	61	72	79	78	69
ICCA ranking	19	27	22	23	21	31

Source: International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, 2012)

However, business tourism in Malaysia will not be able to sustain its growth unless some factors are looked into. In his study, Hankinson (2005) analysed destination brand image from a business tourism perspective in 15 UK destinations. The author highlighted eight main clusters of brand image attributes: physical environment, economic activity, business tourism facilities, accessibility, social facilities, strength of reputation, people characteristics and destination size. The study concluded that the most salient destination image attributes - the physical environment and economic activity are more closely related to the environment in which the event takes place.

Another interesting study by Haven *et al.* (2007) on the critical factors for business tourism destinations in UK included leadership, networking, branding, skills, ambassadors, infrastructure and bidding. The study concluded that leadership is critical in providing a vision for business tourism and a strategy to achieve it. This can be aided by customised information according to the needs of their different clients – networking and sharing information through membership of trade associations. The need for high-quality skills to underpin business tourism products and services further exacerbates labour market issues in relation to the tourism industry. Ambassadors are crucial to the bidding process. It is likewise important to have the appropriate infrastructure to support business tourism and facilitate appropriate access to and within the destinations. And lastly, bidding is a sophisticated activity that requires in-depth understanding of the business tourism market, idiosyncrasies of different associations and detailed product knowledge.

Chin and Chiu's study (2011) used selected Asian countries (Singapore, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan) to measure the environmental performance of the convention destination via Grey Situation Decision Making (GSDM) and Radar Chart. The GSDM method is a procedure to deal with one event that has multiple decisions in the same event and chooses the best or the worst situation. When radar chart data is appropriately transformed using the Radar Chart, the area within the polygon represents a global measure of performance with increasing or decreasing areas reflecting better or poorer overall performance.

The findings of the earlier mentioned study showed that Singapore has the best performance in Asia while Japan is superior in the entire environmental performance of a convention destination. Some of the recommendations made in the study to improve convention destinations are as follows: Singapore should improve meeting image and convention advertisements while Japan needs to strengthen macroeconomic stability and ground transport infrastructure. Other Asian countries like China and Korea need to increase competitiveness in terms of tourism infrastructure while Thailand and Taiwan need to improve their transport infrastructure system and build strong attractions and tourism image, respectively.

These literature support the study for destination choice and establish the basis for the survey questionnaire. The destination choices for international MICE-related events are all dependent on the factors cited in the previous studies (Haven *et. al.*, 2007; Hankinson, 2005; Chin & Chiu, 2011). This study derived its list of contributory factors from these studies and used the list to prepare the research instrument. This study anticipates similar findings with these earlier studies.

According to Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Directory (2011), MICE-related establishments in the country include auditoriums (6), exhibition halls and centres (20) and hotels with convention and exhibition facilities (153). With support from MyCEB, particularly through subvention programs, these establishments that engage in high-yield tourism activities especially those who can cater to foreign organizers and participants stand to benefit the most. However, not all of these establishments have good reputation in the global meeting industry or are affiliated with international organisations such as the ICCA, Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC), Union des Foires Internationales (UFI) or The Global Association of Exhibition Industry and Union of International Association (UIA).

The Case of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

The Centre was chosen as the study site as it is a well-known international hub for MICE-related activities in Malaysia. Its current status as the venue for any meeting activities both in domestic and foreign markets is testament to this. In addition, it has won a number of awards from various reputable tourism and non-tourism organisations, in recognition as one of the best destinations for meetings; not to mention its membership in various international associations.

The Centre is located in the busy commercial and business capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur (KL). It started its operations in June 2005 and is managed by Convex Malaysia Sdn Bhd, a joint-venture company between The Centre (Holdings) Sdn Bhd and AEG Ogden Pty Ltd, Australia. Its facilities and amenities include 2 auditoria

Table 2. Events at the Centre, 2005–2013

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
	(Jun – Dec)									
No of Events	225	430	628	543	864	1,167	1,346	1,442	1,565	8,210
Total Delegates	787,016	1,459,112	2,133,444	2,056,820	1,955,639	1,959,218	1,720,763	1,670,875	1,969,584	15,712,471
Total Delegate Days	835,902	1,593,283	2,225,138	2,199,191	2,031,420	2,144,678	1,913,260	1,897,303	2,175,225	17,015,400
Total Economic Impact (In Million RM)	318	441	469	568	404	762	547	590	697	4,796

(3,000 and 500 seating capacity), 5 exhibition halls (9,710 m²/104,480 ft² column-free space), 1 grand ballroom, 1 banquet hall, 3 conference halls, 20 meeting rooms and 1,641 hotel rooms on site (17,581 rooms in 4- and 5-star properties within 10 minutes drive).

To date (as of December 2013), the total number of events that have been held is 8,210 while 2013 holds the record for the the biggest number with 1,565 events. In its eight years of operations, it had managed to attract a total of 15.7 million delegates to its facilities with an estimated worth of RM4.796 billion. Its annual average income is estimated at RM533 million with an annual average number of delegates reaching up to 1.8 million. This in return has provided business and employment opportunities the local retailers, hotel/accommodation proprietors and the airline industries.

Table 3 shows the type of events held at The Centre and 40% are comprised of MICE-related events such as conventions, exhibitions, meetings and events.

Table 3. Type of events held in the Centre, 2005–2012

Type of Events	2005 (Jun – Dec)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Banquet & Functions	76	146	219	153	106	134	140	127	1,101
Convention	24	24	22	45	36	35	29	34	249
Exhibition	26	39	64	63	58	65	67	64	446
Meetings & Events	96	206	293	255	244	195	120	100	1,509
Entertainment	3	15	30	27	24	38	28	23	188
TenOnCall	–	–	–	–	396	700	926	1,049	3,071
PlenaryOnCall	–	–	–	–	–	–	36	45	81
Total	225	430	628	543	864	1,167	1,346	1,442	6,646

Table 4 lists 10 international conferences that have been reserved for 2014-2016 at The Centre, mainly in the field of medical sciences.

Table 4. List of future events, 2014–2016

Event	No. of Delegates	Dates
Million Dollor Round Table Conference	4,000	13–15 February 2014
Lamp Asia	2,500	16–17 February 2014
12th International Congress on Obesity	2,200	17–20 March 2014
CPA Australia Career Expo 2014	3,000	19 April 2014
The Digital Education Show Asia 2014	3,000	27–28 May 2014
Congress and General Assembly of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG Congress)	3,000	9–16 May 2014
Powergen Asia & Renewable Energy World Asia 2014	10,000	10–12 September 2014
Automechanika Kuala Lumpur 2015	6,000	19–21 March 2015
International Human Genome Meeting 2015	1,000	16–19 March 2015
10th Asia Pacific Congress of Allergy, Asthma and Clinical Immunology 2016	1,500	5–8 November 2016

The paper further aims to assist stakeholders in the tourism industry in general and business tourism in particular to improve services and develop strategic plans as a catalyst for the country's economic growth. The Centre shoulders a gigantic task in trying to sustain its competitiveness in the global meeting industry. The Centre also hopes to gather input from these international events to be utilised in its future actions and plans. The insights from this study are hoped to lead to higher income, investment and employment to other complementary sectors such as airlines, hotels, shopping centres, bars and restaurants, among others.

Methodology

Research methodology refers to the nature of research design and methods used in the study. Methodology guides the way for researchers to gain knowledge about the world and instructs the researchers in the way research is constructed and conducted (Sikes, 2005). Methodology is, therefore, a vital part of any research project because it reflects upon, evaluates and justifies the methods used in the research (Wellington, 2003).

The methodology used in a research is often influenced by practicality, feasibility, situational factors and also by personal predilection and interests (Sikes, 2005). The methodology and methods employed in any research usually rely on the purpose and area of inquiry. The best methodology and methods should meet the research purpose and answer the research questions. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages.

The current study used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. However, in order to serve the aims and objectives of the study, the current study used mainly a quantitative research approach. According to Veal (2005), “quantitative research involves the gathering and analysis of numerical data” (p. 25), as it relies on numerical evidence to provide socio-economic demographic statistics, descriptive statistics, draw conclusions or to answer research questions. Therefore, the survey instrument used in this study is mainly quantitative. On the other hand, the current study also employed a bit of the qualitative approach by asking a few structured open-ended questions. According to Veal (2005), the qualitative approach normally collects large amounts of information about a small number of people rather than a limited amount of information about a large number of people.

The survey instrument consisted of three major sections and demographics. The first section was about ‘travel information’ with categorical data questions (Q1-11) about ‘traveling to KL, Malaysia’, ‘airline(s) used’, ‘flying class’, ‘reason for choosing a particular airlines’, ‘flying passage’, ‘travelling with companions’, ‘number of adults traveling with’, ‘number of children traveling with’, ‘booking pre- or post-tours’, ‘number of nights stayed’ and ‘name of the hotel stayed’. The second section measured ‘delegate spending in US\$’ with categorical data questions (Q12-19) about ‘conference registration fees’, ‘airfare cost’ and ‘hotel/accommodation’, ‘spending on local transportation’, ‘food and beverage’, ‘shopping’, ‘entertainment/activities’, and ‘other spending’. The third section (Q20-26) collected information about ‘delegates experience’ about ‘The Centre facilities and services’, ‘airline/s company’, ‘hotel/accommodation’, ‘local transportation’, ‘restaurants’, ‘shopping facilities’, and ‘entertainment/activities’ in the city using Likert-type scale questions with ratings of 1 being ‘poor’ and 5 ‘being excellent’. This section also asked recommendations for improvements. Q27 & 28 asked about ‘the best liked and least liked things about KL’, Q29 about ‘re-visit intentions’ and the final question, Q30 about respondent’s satisfaction. The demographics section collected data about the respondents gender, age, income level, and country of origin.

The sample of the study comprised of local and foreign delegates who attended five MICE-related events in The Centre in 2011 (Table 5). These delegates are referred to, in the study, as business tourists.

Table 5. Selected sample events

No.	Name of Event and Organizers	No. of Delegates	Dates
1.	5 th CINP Asia Pacific Regional Meeting 2011 by International College of Neuro-Psychopharmacology	300	19–22 June 2011
2.	70th Institute of Internal Auditors International Conference 2011 by Institute of Internal Auditors Malaysia (IIA Malaysia) and Institute of Internal Auditors (International)	2,000	10–13 July 2011
3.	SIFE World Cup 2011 by Ministry of International Trade & Industry (MITI) and Student in Free Enterprise (SIFE)	1,500	3–5 October 2011
4.	Asia Pacific Congress in Maternal Fetal Medicine (APCMFM) 2011 by <i>Persatuan Pendidikan Obstetrik & Ginekologi Kuala Lumpur</i> and The Fetal Medicine Foundation	500	14–16 October 2011
5.	21 st Asia Pacific Cancer Congress 2011 by Malaysian Oncological Society (MOS)	1,000	9–12 Nov. 2011

Note: Population, N=5,300

The non-probability convenience sampling technique (Aaker, Kumar, Leone & Day, 2010) was used to gather primary data. A team of five trained junior researchers (from Taylor’s University masters & degree students), hired on daily basis, carried out the fieldwork at the premises of The Centre and a total of 950 survey questionnaires were collected from the delegates who attended the selected MICE-related events. However, only 809 surveys were found to be useful, representing a 85.15% response rate from the original sample of 950 and a 15.26% response rate from the original population (N=5,300). This indicated that the actual population sample size is more than the acceptable level of 10%.

For the quantitative data analysis, the study employed SPSS 21.0 and calculated descriptive analysis such as frequencies, percentages, graphs, means, and standard deviations. As for the qualitative data analysis of the structured open-ended questions, patterns and trends in the responses were observed to derive some conclusions.

Findings

Demographic Breakdown

Table 6 shows the demographic breakdown of the respondents. Most of the respondents were males (50.6%) and the majority of the respondents were below the age of 30 (30.9%). With respect to income level (monthly), 33.9% of the respondents earned below US\$2,000. In terms of respondents' nationality, 59.6% were from Asian countries, among these, 30% are of Malaysian nationality, while the remaining 70% are of foreign nationalities from six continents. The selected MICE-related conferences hosted delegates from 154 cities and 76 countries around the globe including Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe.

Table 6. Demographic breakdown of sample (n=809)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	409	50.6
Male	400	49.4
Total	809	100.0
<i>Age</i>		
Below 30	250	30.9
31–40	243	30.0
41–50	208	25.7
51 or above	108	13.3
Total	809	100.0
<i>Income level (in US\$)</i>		
Below 2000	274	33.9
2001 – 4000	246	30.4
4001 or more	289	35.7
Total	809	100.0
<i>Nationality (by continent)</i>		
Africa	54	6.7
Asia	563	59.6
Europe	94	11.6
Australia	31	3.8
North America	53	6.7
South America	14	1.7
Total	809	100.0

Travel Information

As shown in Table 7, most of the respondents traveled to KL/Malaysia by air (76.9%). In the case of respondents' preference in traveling with a specific airline(s) company, all respondents traveled with 44 different airlines companies with Malaysian Airlines (23.2%) as the top airline preference. Other airlines mentioned include AirAsia (6.8%), Emirates Airlines (5.3%), Cathay Pacific Airlines (4.9%), Cebu Pacific Air (4.1%), and Singapore Airlines (4%). Other interesting travel information include the following: the majority of the respondents used economy class (63.4%) and one of the reasons for choosing a particular airline was the recommendation by their company/conference organizer (18.9%). In the case of flying passage, respondents had the opportunity to have direct flights (45.5%), however 21.9% of the respondents had to use connecting flights as many of the delegates came from 76 countries around the world. With regards to traveling with companion(s), 53% of the respondents traveled with friends, which means that more than half of the respondents attended conferences/meetings in groups, however, a notable percentage (14.5%) of the respondents preferred to travel with family (e.g. spouse/partner or children). Among them, 34.2% respondents traveled with more than 3 persons (adults) in their travel party and 4.2% of respondents traveled with a child in their party. The majority (68%) of the respondents had no booking for tours while the rest had booked pre- or post-tours. The average length of stays ranged from 3-5 days (55.7%) in various hotels in the city. The most preferred hotels include Traders Hotel (9.1%), Mandarin Oriental Hotel (7.4%), Impiana Hotel (7%), and Hotel Novotel (5.2%). A notable percentage of respondents (5.1%) stayed with family or friends. Although respondents have a lower average length of stay, however, they have a higher yield of spending as shown in the succeeding table.

Table 7. Travel information of delegates

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Travel to Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia</i>		
By air	622	76.9
By land (bus/train/car)	187	23.1
By sea	0	0.0
Others	0	0.0
Total	809	100.0

(con't)

Table 7 (cont)

<i>Airline(s) traveled (top six)</i>		
NA*	187	23.1
Malaysian Airlines	188	23.2
Air Asia	55	6.8
Emirates Airlines	43	5.3
Cathay Pacific Airlines	40	4.9
Cebu Pacific Air	33	4.1
Singapore Airlines	32	4.0
Others	231	28.6
Total	809	100.0
<i>Flight class</i>		
None	187	23.1
Economy class	513	63.4
Business class	103	12.7
First class	4	0.5
Others	2	0.2
Total	809	100.0
<i>Reason for choosing particular airline(s)</i>		
None	187	23.1
Low cost	150	18.5
Good package	98	12.1
Trusted airline	139	17.2
Recommended by company/conference organizer	153	18.9
Others	82	10.2
Total	809	100.0
<i>Flight passage</i>		
None	187	23.1
Transfer	67	8.3
Connecting flight	177	21.9
Direct flight	368	45.4
Others	10	1.3
Total	809	100.0
<i>Traveling with companion(s)</i>		
None	263	32.5
Friends	429	53.0
Family (e.g. spouse/partner or children)	117	14.5
Total	809	100.0

(cont)

Table 7 (cont)

<i>Number of adults in travel party</i>		
None	155	19.2
1 person	166	20.5
2 persons	144	17.8
3 persons	67	8.3
More than 3 persons	277	34.2
Total	809	100.0
<i>Number of children in party (under 18)</i>		
None	722	89.2
1 child	34	4.2
2 children	26	3.2
3 children	13	1.6
More than 3 children	14	1.7
Total	809	100.0
<i>Pre- or post-tour booking</i>		
Yes	259	32.0
No	550	68.0
Total	809	100.0
<i>Number of nights stayed in Kuala Lumpur</i>		
Less than 3 nights	167	20.6
3-5 nights	451	55.7
6-7 nights	114	14.1
More than 7 nights	77	9.5
Total	809	100.0
<i>Hotel/accommodation in Kuala Lumpur</i>		
NA*	227	28.1
Traders Hotel	74	9.1
Mandarin Oriental Hotel	60	7.4
Impiana Hotel	57	7.0
Hotel Novotel	42	5.2
Others....	349	42.3
Total	809	100.0

*NA=Not available

Delegates Spending

Table 8 shows delegates' spending in attending conferences/meetings at the Centre. The table shows that 31.9% of respondents paid less than US\$500 as their conference/meeting registration fees; however, 18.3% of respondents had their conference/meeting registration fees paid by the sponsor. A number of respondents (29.1%) paid less than US\$500 for their airfare while 23.9% paid more than US\$1001. 33.1% of the respondents paid less than US\$500 for hotel/accommodation while 10.3% paid more than US\$1001. Moreover, spending on local transportation and food and beverage was only less than US\$100 with 46.2% and 31.9% shares, respectively. Furthermore, 46.1% and 52.8% respondents spent less than US\$500 on shopping and entertainment activities, respectively. In addition, 27.9% of respondents spent less than US\$500 on other miscellaneous spending. The majority (40.8%) of respondents (business tourists) visiting The Centre spent less than US\$3,200 (RM9,731, as per currency conversion rates on 28 January 2012) while 13.8% of them spent US\$6,408 (approximately RM19,486, as per currency conversion rates on 28 January 2012) or more. This shows that business tourists attending MICE-related events in The Centre have higher spending compared to other types of tourists thus generating more income for the Malaysia domestic economy. This basically reflects that the Centre's MICE-related events attract higher yield tourism, an important factor for Malaysia's tourism sustainability.

Table 8. Delegates' spending (in total, US\$)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Conference/Meeting registration fee(s)</i>		
None	0	0
Less than 500	258	31.9
501–1000	194	24
1001 or more	209	25.8
Paid by the sponsor	148	18.3
Total	809	100.0
<i>Airfare cost</i>		
None	187	23.1
Less than 500	236	29.1
501–1000	193	23.9
1001 or more	193	23.9
Total	809	100.0

(cont)

Table 8 (cont')

<i>Cost of hotel/accommodation</i>		
None	227	28.1
Less than 500	268	33.1
501–1000	231	28.5
1001 or more	83	10.3
Total	809	100.0
<i>Spending on local transportation</i>		
None	160	19.8
Less than 100	374	46.2
101–200	197	24.4
201 or more	78	9.6
Total	809	100.0
<i>Spending on food and beverage</i>		
None	119	14.7
Less than 100	258	31.9
101–200	235	29
201 or more	197	24.4
Total	809	100.0
<i>Spending on shopping</i>		
None	160	19.8
Less than 500	373	46.1
501–1000	187	23.1
1001 or more	89	11.0
Total	809	100.0
<i>Spending on entertainment/leisure activities</i>		
None	278	34.4
Less than 500	427	52.8
501–1000	83	10.2
1001 or more	21	2.6
Total	809	100.0
<i>Other spending</i>		
None	513	63.4
Less than 500	226	27.9
501–1000	51	6.3
1001 or more	19	2.4
Total	809	100.0

Delegates' Experience

Table 9 shows that the respondents had relatively high perception scores (mean ≥ 3.5) regarding 'the Centre facilities and services' and 'shopping facilities'. However, there was a relatively low perception score (mean ≤ 3.5) for 'airline(s) company', 'hotel/accommodation', 'local transportation', 'restaurants', and 'entertainment/activities'. The low perception scores reveal that these areas need to be considerably improved to produce a fruitful delegate experience. In addition to these experiences, respondents also highlighted some concerns such as 'traffic jam and parking problems in the city', 'monorail facilities to be expanded and improved', 'attitude of immigration officers at the airport', 'long waiting queues in the Customs hall of the airport', 'welcome reception of some hotels was poor and hotels to improve on the services' and 'free Wi-Fi zone inside The Centre conference venues'. These are some of the issues raised by the respondents and should be taken into account by the relevant parties in order to further improve their services and facilities.

Furthermore, Table 9 highlights the best and least liked features of KL as mentioned by the respondents. The delegates found the city 'very attractive and modern looking', 'appreciate natural beauty', 'cultural diversity', 'shopping facilities', 'tourist attractions', 'parks' etc. Many respondents disliked some aspects such as 'rising pollution in the city', 'traffic problems' and 'taxis' (e.g. drivers not using taxi meters). Some of these features (such as issues related to 'cleanliness' and 'transportation') are both listed as the best and least liked. It should be noted that these are just perceptions of the delegates thus may only be applicable to each individual's judgment.

Table 9 shows that 40.5% of the respondents are likely to re-visit KL within next three years as shown in the respondents' overall experience. This substantiates the respondents' high perception (mean=4.39) on 'their spending at convention/meeting justify their visit/experience in KL' which implies that delegates were, overall, satisfied and happy.

Table 9. Delegates' experience

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
How would you rate Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre facilities and services?	4.14	0.90
How would you rate the airline(s) company?	3.32	1.49
How would you rate the hotel/accommodation?	3.48	1.40

(con't)

Table 9 (con't)

How would you rate the local transportation? (Trains, public buses & taxis)	3.17	1.30
How would you rate the restaurants where you have your meals?	3.40	1.17
How would you rate the shopping facilities? (Shopping malls and retail outlet stores)	3.59	1.32
How would you rate the entertainment/leisure activities? (Sightseeing, visiting historical places/museums, cinemas, adventure sports etc.)	3.21	1.57

Recommendations by Respondents:

Based on their experience, respondents raised concerns on the following issues:

- Traffic jam and parking problems in the city
- Monorail facilities to be expanded and improved
- Attitude of immigration officers at the airport
- Long waiting queues in Customs Hall of the airport
- Welcome reception of some hotels was poor and hotels to improve on the services
- Free Wi-Fi zone to be provided at The Centre facility

Most respondents had similar viewpoints about the best-liked aspects of Kuala Lumpur:

- The modernity of downtown KL
- A hub for business development
- Government strategy for future development
- The architecture and infrastructure of the city (amazing skyline, architectural design of buildings, electronic security systems, roads, modern-looking hotels etc.)
- Tourist attractions and downtown city centre (Petronas Twin Tower, Menara KL Tower, Bukit Bintang, Genting Highland, Sunway Lagoon, Putrajaya mosque, The Centre itself, museums and parks etc.)
- Natural beauty of the city and sightseeing attractions (Forest cover, Batu Caves, Bird Park, Orchid Garden etc.)
- Friendliness and hospitality of the locals
- Cultural diversity (and unique respect among people of various religions)
- Amazing shopping and entertainment (restaurants and bars) facilities
- Culture-rich and modern food and restaurant facilities
- Hygiene and cleanliness
- The affordable costs of shopping and dining
- Convenience of integrated transportation facilities (trains, RapidKL bus, taxis etc.)
- Distance from Singapore and Thailand
- Amazing and pleasant weather

(con't)

Table 9 (cont)

Most respondents had similar viewpoints about the least-liked aspects of Kuala Lumpur:

- Air pollution and cleanliness of the city
- Cleanliness of the public toilets
- Attitude of immigration officers and congestion at the airport
- Traffic conditions and crowd in the city (narrow roads)
- Parking problems in the city
- Inadequate road signs – difficult for tourist to find their way around
- Lack of historical sights and/or signs not clear
- Lack of phone booth facilities in the city
- Lack of clearly zoned smoking areas in city
- Availability of continental food and restaurants
- Prices of alcohol beverages in the city (high prices)
- Duration of ‘hop on and hop off’ tour (Long waiting time at stops)
- Beggars around the city
- Access to supermarkets and minimarkets in the city
- The price variations in markets and shopping malls (local businesses taking advantage of tourists)
- Not all transportation are linked with each other
- Communication with local people
- Hot and humid weather
- High cost of living
- No free Wi-Fi at hotels
- Taxi drivers not using taxi meters
- Huge buildings are very close to each other
- Stories and actual incidents of snatch theft
- Safety and security measures in city (especially at night)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Re-visiting Kuala Lumpur</i>		
No opinion	174	21.5
Within 3 years	328	40.5
Later, some other time	307	37.9
Total	809	100.0
Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Do you think your spending at this particular convention/meeting justifies your visit/experience in Kuala Lumpur?	4.39	1.44

Conclusion and Recommendations

Malaysia's business tourism is defined within the scope of business activities in relation to tourism as one may refer this as a meeting industry or in terms of demand side, the expenditures made by an individual associated with a business tourism trip. For the benefit of the study, business tourism was operationally defined as 'travel-related activities and expenditures of business tourists attending international MICE-related events' at The Centre either as local or foreign participants. The study focused on five MICE-related events conducted at The Centre in 2011 to obtain a better understanding of the micro-impacts and benefits of business tourism in Malaysia. To achieve this, simple qualitative and quantitative methods were employed.

The majority of the respondents (70%) were foreign nationalities from 76 countries around the world while the remaining were local Malaysians. The respondents mainly preferred Malaysian Airlines based on the recommendation of their company/conference organizer. A majority of them traveled by direct flight in economy class while 21.9% of the respondents used connecting flights. Most respondents had no prior booking arrangements for pre- or post-tours. Most preferred hotels were Traders Hotel, Mandarin Hotel, Impiana Hotel and Hotel Novotel. The average length of stay was only 3-5 days while the average spending amounted to less than US\$3,200 during their period of stay. The average spending on various items such as conference registration, airfare, hotel/accommodation, local transportation, food and beverage, shopping and entertainment were all less than US\$500. The findings reveal that business tourists attending MICE-related events in The Centre spend more thus generate more income for the domestic economy.

Moreover, with regard to respondents' travel experiences in Malaysia, many express high perceptions regarding The Centre facilities and services while having low perceptions for airlines, hotel accommodation, local transportation, restaurants and entertainment/activities. Some notable concerns raised by the respondents include 'traffic jam and parking problems in the city', 'monorail facilities to be expanded and improved', 'attitude of immigration officers at the airport', 'long waiting queues in Customs hall of the airport', 'welcome reception of some hotels was poor and hotels to improve on the services' and 'free Wi-Fi zone inside The Centre conference venues'. Despite these concerns, the respondents also found KL as 'very attractive and modern looking', 'appreciate natural beauty', 'cultural diversity', 'shopping facilities', 'tourist attractions', 'parks' etc. However, some

respondents disliked the ‘rising pollution in the city’, ‘traffic problems’, ‘taxis’ (e.g. drivers not using taxi meters) etc. Some of these were listed in the best and least liked aspects of KL. However, a number of respondents have affirmed to re-visit KL within next three years.

An important highlight of the study is the low average length of stay of business tourists. However, this is usually offset by the higher yield of spending per tourist which generates more income for the domestic economy and plays an important factor for the sustainability of Malaysia’s tourism industry. Some of the concerns raised by the respondents can be useful reference for relevant stakeholders in improving further their services and facilities. Moreover, this will also help encourage business tourists to revisit KL and other parts of Malaysia.

Based on the concerns raised by the respondents as observed by them during their short stay in KL and as a participant in various international MICE-related events at The Centre, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Although some infrastructure projects related to tourism are already in the pipeline, the local and national governments should speed up the implementation and operations of the said facilities and infrastructures.
- The immigration agency should review its existing policies and procedures with regard to the point of entry for foreign tourists in order to solve long queues and other hassles that inconvenience business tourists
- The relevant airline companies can perhaps review their flight routes to minimise connecting flights.
- Various hotel associations should further improve hotel facilities and service by adopting better customer care service.
- The Centre should expand its free Wi-Fi zone to accommodate their conference participants that need internet access.
- The relevant authorities should look at common problems that affect tourists such as traffic jam, air pollution in the city and exorbitant taxi fares to identify potential solutions that can address these issues.
- Financial and administrative support from government and private players to undertake more similar studies to further boost the growth of the meeting industry sector; and
- Further studies on other international conferences conducted by the Centre for a longer period and a comparative study among the major players in the industry.

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