

The Characteristics and Issues of Conference Tourism Research Based on the Urban Competitiveness Model

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Abstract: With the advancement of globalization, conference tourism (MICE) has increasingly become an important component of urban economic development and has attracted growing attention from countries worldwide. Urban competitiveness, as a key indicator for measuring a city's development potential, significantly impacts the attraction and development of conference tourism. Based on the urban competitiveness model, this study explores the characteristics of conference tourism and related issues. By analyzing the impact of factors such as infrastructure, social and cultural environment, and external environment on conference tourism, this paper reveals the driving role of urban competitiveness in the development of the conference tourism industry. Furthermore, the paper delves into the role of conference tourism in promoting the sustainable development of urban economies, the impact of technological innovation on the transformation of conference tourism, and the challenges and opportunities of cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization.

Keywords: Urban competitiveness, conference tourism, characteristic research, economic sustainable development, technological innovation, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

The rapid growth of conference tourism (MICE) worldwide has made it an important driver of urban economic development. With the increasing frequency of international exchanges, competition between cities has become more intense. How to stand out in this fierce competition and attract more conferences and exhibitions has become a significant challenge faced by major cities. Urban competitiveness is seen as an important indicator of a city's overall competitiveness, encompassing various aspects such as economy, society, culture, and infrastructure. This study, based on the urban competitiveness model, systematically analyzes the characteristics of conference tourism and related issues, aiming to fill the gap in research on the relationship between urban competitiveness and conference tourism. By comprehensively discussing factors such as infrastructure, social and cultural environment, and external environment, this study provides theoretical support for enhancing urban competitiveness and promoting the development of the conference tourism industry.

1. The Relationship Between Conference Tourism and Urban Competitiveness

1.1 Definition and Development of Conference Tourism

Conference tourism (MICE, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) refers to tourism activities related to conferences, incentive tourism, exhibitions, and other similar events. It is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary industry that encompasses areas such as conference organization, event planning, exhibition setup, and related tourism services. As an important component of modern urban services, conference tourism not only promotes the economic development of cities but also facilitates cultural exchange and knowledge dissemination[1].

In recent decades, with the advancement of globalization and technological development, conference tourism has gradually become a key engine for urban economies. Particularly under the backdrop of the information technology revolution and digital transformation, both the forms and content of conference tourism have undergone profound changes. Traditional face-to-face meetings have gradually merged with new formats, such as virtual meetings and hybrid conferences, offering cities new opportunities and

challenges to attract international business activities.

Conference tourism not only promotes the economic development of destinations but also contributes to brand building, industrial upgrading, and cultural dissemination. The development of the conference tourism industry shows trends of diversification, specialization, and globalization. Its target audience extends beyond enterprises and professional institutions to include various social groups and cultural exchange programs. As urban competition intensifies, conference tourism has become an important measure of a city's internationalization, innovation, and sustainable development.

1.2 Theoretical Foundation of Urban Competitiveness

Urban competitiveness theory is an interdisciplinary and comprehensive theoretical system aimed at explaining how cities gain competitive advantages in the global economic, social, and cultural competition through different resource allocations and development strategies. Urban competitiveness not only refers to the strength of economic capabilities but also includes the comprehensive manifestation of social, cultural, environmental, and innovative abilities.

According to Porter's competitiveness theory, urban competitiveness stems from unique resources, technological innovation capabilities, and industrial agglomeration effects. These factors determine whether a city can attract external investment, enterprises, and talent, which in turn drives the growth and sustainable development of the city's economy. Additionally, the social and cultural environment, infrastructure, and public service quality of a city are also significant factors that impact its competitiveness. The positive interaction of these elements creates competitive advantages for the city.

In recent years, research on urban competitiveness has not only focused on the construction of hard power (such as infrastructure and capital investment) but also emphasized the cultivation of soft power (such as urban culture, innovation capability, and talent attraction). With the development of globalization and information technology, the connotation of urban competitiveness has gradually expanded, covering multiple dimensions, including global connectivity, innovation ecosystems, and social resilience. Based on this theory, urban competitiveness is not only a driving force for urban economic development but also has a profound impact on a city's social structure, cultural atmosphere, and international status.

1.3 The Relationship Between Conference Tourism and Urban Competitiveness

There is a profound interaction between conference tourism and urban competitiveness. As an important form of urban economy and cultural exchange, conference tourism can effectively enhance the international image of a city and strengthen its soft power, thus promoting the improvement of urban competitiveness. The scale and quality of conference tourism directly impact the economic benefits of the city and are closely related to its global recognition and influence. The enhancement of urban competitiveness can attract more international conferences and exhibitions while promoting the coordinated development of other industries, further solidifying the city's position in global competition[2].

Conference tourism enhances urban competitiveness in multiple ways. The construction of urban infrastructure and service levels is central to improving competitiveness. An efficient transportation system, adequate accommodation facilities, and well-equipped conference venues are essential conditions for hosting large conferences. Continuous investment and improvement can enhance the city's hard power and provide it with the comprehensive capacity to host international conferences. Hosting international conferences not only reflects the city's overall strength in infrastructure but also lays a solid foundation for the development of other related industries.

The social and cultural environment of a city is also crucial to the attractiveness of conference tourism. A city's cultural atmosphere, social inclusiveness, and openness to the outside world directly determine whether conference tourism can attract more international participants. A city's cultural soft power and innovation capabilities become important components of its competitiveness. The accumulation and enhancement of this soft power not only ensure the smooth hosting of conference tourism events but also determine their global influence and attractiveness.

Urban competitiveness is also significantly influenced by the external environment. External support, global networks, and cross-cultural communication are key factors driving the development of conference tourism. An open market environment creates favorable conditions for the prosperity of conference tourism. With the continuous development of information technology and the internet, cities can host cross-regional and cross-cultural conference events through virtual platforms, further expanding

their influence and competitiveness. This digital transformation not only changes the format of conference tourism but also enhances the city's position on the global stage.

2. Research on the Characteristics of Conference Tourism under the Urban Competitiveness Model

2.1 The Impact of Infrastructure and Urban Competitiveness on Conference Tourism

Infrastructure is one of the core components of urban competitiveness and plays a crucial role in the attraction and development of the conference tourism industry. A city's transportation network, conference venues, accommodation facilities, and information services directly determine the operational efficiency and appeal of conference tourism. In the context of globalization, international transportation networks have become one of the key factors in attracting conference tourism. The connectivity of diversified transportation systems, such as airports, railways, and highways, ensures that participants from all over the world can arrive and depart smoothly.

Conference venues and facilities form the foundation of conference tourism development. Cities that can offer high-standard conference venues, exhibition centers, and related supporting facilities enhance their competitiveness and attract more international conferences and exhibitions. According to the urban competitiveness model, the quality and scale of a city's infrastructure directly affect its ability to host international conferences, exhibitions, and other large-scale events. For example, the construction of modern conference centers and exhibition halls in major international cities not only provides venues for conference tourism but also significantly elevates the city's position in global business and cultural activities[3].

Furthermore, information infrastructure has gradually become a core element of modern conference tourism. The application of digital technology enables the realization of new formats such as online conferences, hybrid meetings, and virtual exhibitions, further expanding the participation and influence of conference tourism. With the development of technologies such as big data, 5G communication, and artificial intelligence, conference tourism is no longer limited to traditional physical venues but also enhances global connectivity through digital platforms, thereby increasing the city's competitiveness.

2.2 The Reciprocal Relationship Between Social and Cultural Environment and Conference Tourism

The social and cultural environment plays a crucial role in the attractiveness of conference tourism. A city's social and cultural atmosphere, cultural inclusivity, social stability, and innovative vitality all directly impact its global appeal. In the context of continuous global economic and cultural integration, conference tourism has gradually shifted from a traditional business function to a venue for cultural exchange. As a result, the social and cultural environment of a city has become increasingly significant in driving conference tourism.

The diversity and inclusiveness of a city's social and cultural environment are key conditions for attracting international conferences and exhibitions. Cities that provide a multicultural backdrop and a relaxed social atmosphere can attract participants from around the world. If a city can overcome cultural differences and build a globally-minded cultural ecosystem, it will effectively enhance its attractiveness and drive the frequent hosting of international conferences. This not only promotes the international development of a city's economy, society, and culture but also strengthens its competitiveness in the global conference tourism market[4].

Innovation capacity and the maturity of the cultural and creative industries are also important factors in driving the transformation and upgrading of the conference tourism industry. Cities with strong innovation capabilities can create unique conference experiences and interactive models, meeting the increasingly diverse market demands. For example, the application of digital technology and the concept of sustainable development not only enhances the quality of conferences but also injects new vitality into conference tourism. These innovative measures not only strengthen a city's position in global competition but also promote the further development of the conference tourism market.

The stability and security of the social and cultural environment are also key guarantees for the successful hosting of conference tourism. For organizers of international conferences and exhibitions, the political stability, social harmony, and security environment of a city are critical factors in determining whether it becomes a preferred conference tourism destination. Cities with social stability can provide a good environment for conference participants, enhancing their trust in the destination and further boosting the city's appeal.

2.3 External Environmental Factors Affecting the Development of Conference Tourism

External environmental factors, such as public support, the global economic situation, and international cooperation networks, have a profound impact on the development of conference tourism. As the processes of globalization and informatization accelerate, the changes in the external environment are becoming increasingly significant for the conference tourism industry. Public support and services are key influencing factors in the external environment. Relevant authorities can directly drive the growth of the conference tourism industry by providing financial support, tax incentives, and infrastructure development. Establishing special funds or implementing preferential measures can attract more international conferences and enhance the city's global recognition and competitiveness.

The global economic situation also plays an increasingly prominent role in conference tourism. Under the backdrop of economic globalization, cooperation among multinational enterprises and international organizations has become closer, and the number and scale of international conferences and exhibitions have steadily increased. However, the uncertainty of the global economy, such as economic crises and changes in the trade environment, may cause fluctuations in the conference tourism market, impacting the city's attractiveness for hosting conferences.

The establishment of international cooperation networks and global connections provides more opportunities for the development of conference tourism. Cities that join international cooperation platforms and promote cross-border exchanges can enhance their competitiveness in the global conference tourism market. As global conferences and exhibitions continue to grow, cities' opportunities for international cooperation are also increasing, further driving their globalization and internationalization processes.

3. Discussion on Conference Tourism Issues Based on the Urban Competitiveness Model

3.1 The Role of Conference Tourism in Urban Economic Sustainable Development

As an important component of the service industry, conference tourism has become one of the core factors driving the sustainable development of urban economies. By hosting various conferences, exhibitions, and large-scale events, cities can attract a large number of domestic and international participants, thereby promoting economic growth. Conference tourism not only directly boosts consumption in sectors such as accommodation, catering, and transportation but also indirectly stimulates the innovation and development of regional industries, thus enhancing the city's overall competitiveness[5].

The role of conference tourism in economic sustainable development is reflected in several aspects. First, conference tourism helps create a large number of job opportunities. Service industries related to conferences, such as conference planning, hospitality, transportation, and tourism, provide abundant employment positions in cities, thereby activating the local labor market. Through the increase in employment opportunities, cities can maintain a high level of stability during economic transformation.

Second, conference tourism promotes the diversification of a city's economic structure. Globalization has facilitated the hosting of various cross-industry conferences and exhibitions, spanning sectors from technology and culture to education and finance. The wide range of industries covered by these conferences promotes in-depth integration among the city's various sectors, injecting new vitality into economic development. Finally, conference tourism promotes the improvement of urban infrastructure.

Cities hosting large conferences and events typically need to invest in transportation, accommodation, and exhibition facilities, and this infrastructure enhancement not only meets the demands of conferences but also promotes the further development of other industries.

3.2 Technological Innovation and the Transformation of Conference Tourism

Technological innovation is continually reshaping the structure and forms of the conference tourism industry. The application of digital technology has not only changed the way traditional conferences are participated in but has also driven a comprehensive transformation of the conference tourism industry. From online conferences to intelligent service systems, technology has brought new opportunities to conference tourism.

The rise of virtual conferences marks a significant transformation in the conference tourism industry.

With the application of emerging technologies such as video conferencing, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR), conference formats have become more flexible and diverse. Online and hybrid meetings not only reduce participants' costs but also overcome geographic and time limitations, enabling global participants to communicate and collaborate more efficiently. This transformation has not only enhanced participation efficiency but also strengthened the global appeal and engagement of conferences, especially during special periods such as the pandemic, where online conferences became a vital means of ensuring the continuity of the industry.

The application of smart city technologies further drives innovation in conference tourism. For example, intelligent conference venue management, smart transportation systems, and electronic check-in technologies improve the efficiency and quality of conference services. Smart technologies not only enhance the participant experience but also strengthen conference management and operational capabilities, making conference organization more precise and efficient. Moreover, the use of big data analysis and cloud computing technology enables organizers to obtain real-time data on participants' needs, allowing them to better customize conference content and services, further improving participant satisfaction and interaction[6].

3.3 The Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization and Cross-Cultural Communication

The acceleration of globalization has led to the rapid growth of the conference tourism industry, presenting both new challenges and opportunities. As international conferences, exhibitions, and academic exchanges increase, cities as conference tourism destinations face more complex demands and competition, while also encountering multiple opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. Globalization has facilitated the internationalization of cities. By hosting international conferences and cultural exchange activities, cities can enhance their status in the global economic and cultural arenas. These events attract experts, scholars, and business elites from different countries and regions, promoting the exchange of knowledge and technology while strengthening the city's influence and appeal globally. At the same time, globalization has promoted cooperation and sharing among cities, providing cities with more resources and support on international platforms, further driving urban economic growth.

However, the challenges brought by cross-cultural communication cannot be ignored. Due to cultural differences, participants may encounter language barriers, value conflicts, and other issues during communication and interaction, which could affect the effectiveness of the conference. Therefore, when hosting international conferences, cities must pay attention to cultural adaptation, ensuring that conference content and formats meet the needs of participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby avoiding communication inefficiencies caused by cultural misunderstandings.

Globalization has intensified competition between cities. An increasing number of cities are investing resources to compete for the international conference tourism market. To stand out in the wave of globalization, cities must enhance their cultural soft power, service quality, and uniqueness. By innovating conference formats, improving infrastructure, and optimizing service experiences, cities can gain an advantage in the fierce global competition and attract more international conferences and tourists.

Conclusion

This study, based on the urban competitiveness model, explores the characteristics and key issues of conference tourism. The results indicate that urban competitiveness significantly impacts conference tourism, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, socio-cultural environment, and external conditions, enhancing a city's attractiveness for conference tourism. Conference tourism not only promotes sustainable economic development but also drives technological innovation and cultural exchange. However, this study has certain limitations, such as insufficient empirical data for some cities and the inability to comprehensively examine all influencing factors. Future research could expand data sources, conduct an in-depth analysis of the development differences among various cities, and focus on emerging areas such as digital transformation and green sustainable development. Additionally, challenges related to cross-cultural communication and global cooperation in the conference tourism industry warrant further attention. This research was funded by Inner Mongolia Vocational College of Business, aiming to provide theoretical foundations and practical guidance for enhancing urban competitiveness in conference tourism.

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