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VENUE MANAGERS AND MEETING PLANNERS: A COMBINED PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS, AND ATTRIBUTES NECESSARY FOR HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

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THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
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by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

VENUE MANAGERS AND MEETING PLANNERS: A COMBINED
PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR ROLES, RELATIONSHIP, AND ATTRIBUTES
NECESSARY FOR HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

The purpose of this research was to gain the perspectives of venue managers and meeting planners on their roles in the meetings industry, their relationship with each other and attributes needed to host a successful meeting. An online survey was conducted involving these two stakeholders to define their roles, assess the strength of their relationship and identify attributes based on their experience with working together and hosting meetings. Results showed that venue managers and meeting planners are essential to the hosting of successful meetings. It also indicated that venue managers are willing to build and maintain stronger relationships with meeting planners and brought to light some attributes such as communication skills, responsiveness, and self-competence, which when improved upon, could help achieve this. The study also presents a theoretical model of how stakeholder co-creation activities can drive more successful meetings.

Maame Afua Offeibea Adu

April 27, 2018

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

<center>**Chapter One**</center>

<center>**Introduction**</center>

Background of the Study

What is truly needed to host a successful meeting? Over the last two decades, researchers have studied the important attributes required for hosting a meeting from the perspectives of meeting planners and organizers (Phillips & Geddie, 2005; Choi & Boger Jr., 2000; MacLaurin &MacLaurin, 2001). Additionally, studies have been done on important variables of meeting destinations based on responses from meeting planners, destination marketers, attendees and tourists (Choi & Boger Jr, 2000; Crouch & Richie, 1998; DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf & Godlewska, 2008). However, these research findings have been outdated as most of the studies were done about twenty years ago (Choi & Boger Jr, 2000). Further, many new factors have had significant impacts on the event system. For example, the current dynamics of technology are changing and the issue of safety and security after recent events are on the minds of venue manager and meeting planners. Case in point is the use of K-9 units at an IMEX America event held a week after a mass shooting incident in Las Vegas (Skift, 2017). They are faced with having to put in place measures to either completely prevent the occurrence or mitigate the impact of situations that could cause harm to their attendees and to property. Ting (2017) stated that "It's not something a lot of people want to think about, but with large gatherings increasingly becoming a target for violent attacks, meeting and event planners have to step up their security tools and protocols".

Important attributes for producing a quality meeting need to be reviewed and updated. In addition, very few studies have explored and compared perspectives of venue

<center>1</center>

managers and meeting planners. Also, a comparative study will reveal the potential gaps in the needs of different meeting stakeholders for hosting a successful event. As the building of new convention centers and the expansion of existing centers and hotels continue, there is a need for research on the perspectives of venue and convention services mangers to help in their positioning strategies.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between meeting planners and venue managers with respect to how both parties bring together their resources with the goals and expectations of organizer and attendees in mind and identify the attributes necessary for hosting a successful meeting from the perspectives of the two parties.

Due to the wide variety and nature of venue types and their different forms of management, this study will only focus on convention centers and study the venue managers of the centers. The titles Convention Services Manager and Venue Manager will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research study are as follow;

1. To identify the role of venue managers and meeting planners in the meeting industry;

2. To understand how venue managers and meeting planners view their relationship and identify attributes necessary to building and maintaining it.

3. To explore important attributes of producing a successful meeting from perspectives of meeting planners and venue managers;

4. To discuss the results of this exploratory study in comparison with previous studies.

Justification

A further investigation on important attributes for producing a quality meeting is needed. It is important to understand how meeting planners and venue managers, view their roles, relations and how these are impacted by recent developments. Results are expected to enable investors, developers and organizers in their decision-making process and enhance the experience that planners and managers provide.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The review of literature will cover an overview of the meeting industry to understand how it operates and its scope and scale, as well as the roles of meeting planners and venue managers in the meeting industry. Theories of value co-creation, relationship marketing, and collaboration will be reviewed to meet the purpose of this study, which is, to explore the relationships between meeting planners and venue managers, and their desired attributes for hosting a successful meeting. The study will then develop a conceptual framework to depict the relations between venue managers and meeting planners as well as their roles in hosting successful meetings based on the three theories in relation to the objectives of the study.

Overview of Meeting Industry

The term "meeting" refers to a gathering of ten or more participants for a minimum of four hours in a contracted venue. These meetings include conventions, conferences, congresses, trade shows and exhibitions, incentive events, corporate/business meetings, and other meetings that meet the criteria of a gathering at a venue for a minimum of four hours, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization. (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014). There was consistent growth in the meeting industry in the early to mid-1900s. From 1979 to 1989, expenses grew exponentially, more than tripling (Bonn & Brand, 1994). Due to the recession in the early 1990s, corporate travel declined but the growth of meetings and conventions remained constant. (Clark & McCleary, 1995).

The increasing presence of technology has played a significant role in the growth of the industry for over a decade now. Acquiring knowledge and networking, from an employer's perspective, should be what conference attendance is about and not traveling (Malek, 2015; Litvin, 2003). Increasing budget cuts and concerns about the economy has caused many organizations to increase their presence online through online meeting elements. Meetings were traditionally designed upon the industrial model where participants sat listening to a presenter inactively with little or no interaction, however, internet platforms have become more exploited as the information era continues to shift and enhance the exchange of information among attendees (Palmer, 2010)

Aside from technology, safety, and security has become a major issue (Ting, 2017) as well as, the political stability in terms of policies and government support of host nations (Weber & Ladkin, 2005) in the meeting and planning process. This, in turn, affects organization's spending, meeting planner's choice of location and venue manager's overall duties. There may be some other trends that could affect the view of meeting planners and venue managers that need to be explored and updated.

Scope and Size of the Meeting Industry. Meetings are means for organizations to gather for decision-making, goal setting, work scheduling, problem-solving and dissemination of information. They provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and networking, employment and investment (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Business meetings are thus central to achieving the goals of individuals as well as the objectives of groups and organizations. The meeting industry constitutes a major reason for business travel and has a massive global economic impact. A wide range of benefits of business events, such as enhancing professional development, generating new forms of technology,

promoting cultural exchange and attracting investment from influential visitors was acknowledged by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (2008) (Edwards, Foley, Hayllar & Schlenker, 2010). A corporate event is defined as a "business-oriented meeting usually hosted by a corporation, in which participants represent the same company, corporate group or client/provider relationships" or a "gathering of employees or representatives of a commercial organization" (Convention Industry Council, 2011). There are several types of corporate events, these include: conferences, seminars, team building events, trade shows, business dinners, press conferences, networking events, incentive travel, shareholder meetings, board meetings and executive retreats (Convention Industry Council, 2011) and take place in locations outside of the organization (Falk & Pizam, 1991).

There are 252 convention centers in the United States, as of October 2016, of which the largest number with 20 locations each are in California and Florida ("Topic: Exhibition, Convention & Meeting Industry", 2016). The largest convention center in the United States ranked 9th globally is the McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois at 2.6 million square feet and a capacity of 241,549 square meters. However, the largest convention center in the world with a full capacity of 463,165 square meters is in Hannover, Germany. The number of meeting hotels in the leading meeting destinations in the United States ranges from 134 in Nashville, Tennessee to 614 hotels in Dallas, Texas as of May 2016 ("Topic: Exhibition, Convention & Meeting Industry", 2016).

In a publication released by American Express Global Business Travel (2016), a forecast of the scope of the North American meeting industry for the year 2017 was made based on responses from a survey of professionals in the industry. With organizations

trying to minimize their spending and receive the best returns on investment by tightening budgets and focusing on experience. An expert in the publication suggested that "Companies are trying to plan meetings that are smaller and more precise with fewer attendees and focusing on one topic or objective for a meeting." (American Express Global Business Travel, 2016, pg. 10). Such decisions will affect the choice of location/venues and influence the venue manager-meeting planner relationships in the industry in finding ways to promote meeting growth. In the same publication, the forecasted share of meetings planned, in millions, in North America ranged from 14.1 training meetings, 13.6 Internal team meetings, 11.6, sales/ marketing meetings, 7.9 conferences/ tradeshows which is a greater than 20% decrease over 2016, to 3.3 product launch (internal/external meetings) also a greater than 20% decrease over 2016. For these meeting types, the number of attendees ranged from 100, a greater than 20% decrease over 2016, for training meetings, 79 for internal team meetings, 162 for sales/ marketing meetings, 408 for conferences/ tradeshows, to 255 which is 20% increase over 2016 for product launches. The average number of days for these meetings also ranged from 2 days, a 20% increase over 2016 for internal team meetings, 2.4 days also a 20% increase over 2016 for product launch meetings, 2.4 days for sales/ marketing meetings, 3 days a 20% decrease over 2016 for conferences/ tradeshows and 2.5 days for training meetings. (American Express Global Business Travel, 2016)

Meeting Planner. For the achievement of meetings, conventions, and exhibitions goals, meeting planners play a crucial role. The meeting planner is responsible for meeting with clients, planning the scope of the meeting, site selection, negotiation of contracts, coordinate event services, event promotion and marketing, registration,

program and floor management, speaker selection, local tours, and transportation (Beaulieu & Love, 2005; Toh, Dekay, & Yates, 2005). They are fundamentally responsible for all aspects of meetings, conventions, and exhibitions and hold positions in areas such as sales and marketing, corporate administration, advertising, public relations, meeting/exhibits planning and personnel training and development in an organization (Falk & Pizam, 1991).

Venue Manager. Upon selection of a destination and venue to host an event, management of the venue must work to meet the desired goals of the meeting planner. A venue manager is the person in charge of managing purpose-built meeting facilities (without lodging) such as conference centers and convention centers; meeting facilities with lodging (hotels, motels, resorts, etc.); and meeting facilities at other venues, such as at universities/colleges, arenas, stadiums, parks, racetracks, museums, theaters, restaurants, etc. (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014). The venue manager is responsible for scheduling, booking, client relations, financial management, marketing, promotions, event coordination, administrative work, venue security, maintenance services and human resources (Hannan, 2003).

Overall, the roles of both meeting planners and venue managers in producing a successful event are summarized in Figure 1.

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┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ Perspectives │  │ Perspectives │      │ Perspectives │  │ Perspectives │
│ of organizers│  │ of attendees │      │ of   meeting │  │ of attendees │
│ / clients    │  │              │      │ planners     │  │              │
└──────┬───────┘  └──────┬───────┘      └──────┬───────┘  └──────┬───────┘
       │        Integrate │                    │                  │
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┌─────────────────────────────┐  Communication ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     MEETING PLANNER         │◄──────────────►│     VENUE MANAGER           │
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            │           Achieve successful meetings             │
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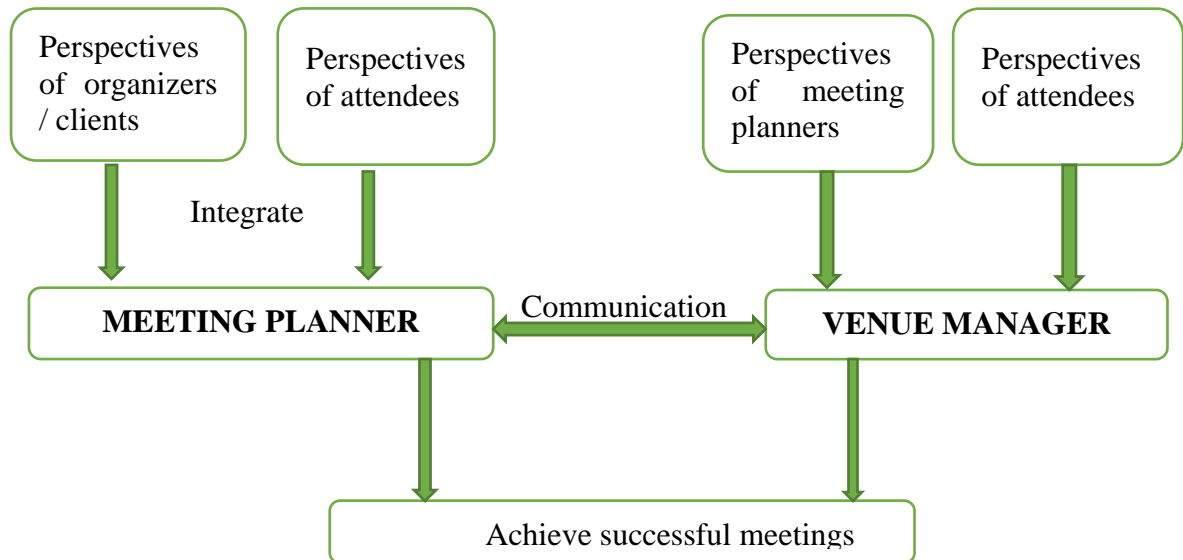
Figure 2. 1 Model of the Role of Meeting Planner and Venue Manager

To date, no major study that explores the roles of venue managers has been conducted. This study aims to explore the relationship aspects of the planning process and the important attributes of meetings from both the venue manager and meeting planner's perspectives.

Meeting Attributes

All stakeholders involved in the organization of a meeting, have various attributes that they require and offer to meet the needs of the meeting. Continuously identifying and understanding the attributes of perceived quality of the meeting product, will enable stakeholders to anticipate delegate and attendee needs, rather than reacting to their dissatisfaction (Robinson & Callan, 2012).

Crouch and Webber (2002) in their study stated that the factors most important to the success of a destination in terms of convention tourism are the services the destination provides and its facilities. This aligns with studies evaluating the satisfaction of meeting planners and attendees with respect to their choice of destinations (Choi & Boger Jr,

2000; Crouch & Richie, 1998; DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf & Godlewska, 2008). With the increasing number of possible destinations to host meetings, conventions, and exhibitions, there is also an increase in competition for market share among destinations to attract meeting planners. These major factors mentioned help venue and convention services managers to position their tourism assets as service-oriented facilities (Breiter & Milman, 2006).

DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf & Godlewska (2008) explored the differences among meeting and exhibition planners in their destination selection criteria. The findings showed that members of the three different associations they surveyed, based on 13 destination criteria, showed the difference in the most important criteria used. The International Association of Exhibition and Events (IAEE) rated exhibition space highest, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) rated perceived value for money highest and Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) rated support services for events as the highest criteria. The need or purpose for holding a meeting must be determined before any pre-planning can begin (Fawzy & Samra, 2008). As such, before a meeting planner contacts a venue, an assessment of what is required from the venue has been made. These attributes can be classified into environmental, organizational and individual (Fawzy & Samra, 2008). The environmental attributes are those cultural, economic, legal, geographic, political and technological factors. The organization attributes are the objectives, policies, procedures, organizational structure, and systems. The individual attributes are the characteristics such as personality, motivation, experience, education, perceived roles and satisfaction with past works of the individual. (Fawzy & Samra, 2008). All these factors are either beyond the control of the planner and

venue manager, govern the way they work, and decision making or determine how well they coordinate.

In a study by Ogden and McCorriston (2007) on "How supplier relationships contribute to success in conference and event management" from the venue managers perspective, the study used nine attributes to assess criteria for selecting suppliers: good working relationships, consistency, familiarity, responsive and flexible, cost benefits, re-booking simplicity, security and control, service development and innovation and new business benefits. The highest rated attribute was a good working relationship. Other criteria included technical expertise, cost, reputation, prior relationship and financial stability. Looking at the needs of planners with respect to venue selection, five general facility-related characteristics were identified by Renaghan and Kay (1987) as the criteria used by planners to select a facility. These include the size of the meeting room, the complexity of the audio-visual equipment, the control of lighting and climate, and price. These characteristics encompass Baloglu and Love (2001)'s observation that quality and response service are among the most important criteria in venue selection in the meeting industry. As the needs of meeting planners reflect the needs of attendees, research on attendee needs and satisfaction with convention centers as conducted by Breiter and Milman (2006), showed that, aside the five characteristics listed, parking and transportation, the availability of food service in and outside the building, signage within and outside the center and seating throughout the center were attributes that were important to attendees. With the rise in the use of technological devices and the internet over the last decade, attendees might be concerned with the availability of device charging ports and strength of cellular network signals within the facility.

Theoretical Framework

These theories discuss the exchanges between firms and consumers, and firms and other firms in their goal achievements. They discuss how the direct interactions between stakeholders through the merging of resources and through dialogue, produce valuable outcomes for their customers.

Co-Creation and Value Creation. In early 1900, the study of marketing featured a foundation of economics and focused on the exchange of tangible goods. The shift to concepts which included customers in decision-making processes in the study of marketing emerged in the 1950's and this lead to the development of the marketing mix, or the 4Ps. Schools of thought focused on relationship marketing, quality management, market orientation, supply and value chain management, human resources and networks, also begun to emerge in the 1980's (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). These were not based on the marketing mix, thus moving away from the goods-focused view to a service-focused view. Rather than being rooted in output, the service dominant view, suggests that value is defined and co-created with the consumer. This makes the more appropriate unit of exchange in marketing the application of competencies, knowledge, and skills, for and to the benefit of the consumer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Therefore, co-creation can only happen when the firm is able to interact with the customer and this must be handled carefully to avoid having a negative effect on the customer's value creation. Interaction being the primary border between co-creating stakeholders is an opportunity to understand, share and serve needs, and to assess and adapt resource commitment (Merz, Yi, & Vargo, 2009, Ranjan & Read, 2014).

When it comes to experiencing value from a service rendered or purchased, the value of service is ultimately experienced by the end-user. The co-creation interaction between parties must be successful to achieve this and is dependent on their goodness of fit. Moran and Ghoshal's (1999, p.409) stated that "it is not resources per se, but the ability to access, deploy, exchange, and combine them that lies at the heart of value creation." And this is especially true in the co-creation process between meeting planner and venue manager. A meeting planner integrates his/her resources with the processes and resources of other partners and vendors depending on his/her goal, to create value for clients and attendees. Grönroos and Voima (2013, p.138) in their study, used "co-creation to denote the joint process whereby firms and customers together, in interaction, create value." They focused on re-analyzing the definition of the service-dominant logic of value creation as value-in-use, meaning that value is created by the user from their interaction with the product or service. They emphasized on "use" as the fundamental concept of value and its creation. Analyzing the original premise of a customer being a co-creator, they concluded that the customer, was rather a value-creator and that a joint sphere could be created if the firm was able to access the customer's closed value sphere. This will then allow the customer to be a co-creator. Under the original premise of the firm only being able to offer value propositions, they concluded that the role of the firm was to create resources embedded with value, which when used by the customer, creates value thereby making the firm a facilitator of value creation. In evaluating how value is determined, Grönroos & Voima (2013) stated that value as value-in-use emerges over time, that is, value accumulates through physical, mental and/or possessive actions in dynamic contexts. They concluded that value is uniquely, experientially and contextually

13

perceived and determined by the customer. Both parties experience value by becoming better or worse off over time during the accumulation process, and value creation becomes a structured process in which roles are defined. Therefore, co-creation cannot occur unless there is an influence of either party on the other or interaction between the two. (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Participation is the way in which interaction is manifested (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Kohler, Fueller, Matzler & Stieger, 2011; Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011). Participation through dialogue (Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008), and engagement (Zhang &Chen, 2008), enables involved discussion by raising the possibility of producing solutions (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012; Bagozzi, Verbeke, Berg, Dietvorst & Worm, 2012). However, the results of this interaction may either be co-creative or co-destructive (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

Relationship Marketing. Like co-creation, relationship marketing (RM) was one of the schools of thoughts on the service-dominant logic of marketing theory that emerged in the early 1980's and became a hot topic in the field of marketing in the 1990's. This theory was formally introduced by Berry (1983) who defined it as "attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships". It was later refined and defined by Grönroos (1991) and defined as "establishing relationships with customers and other parties at a profit by mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises". It is a theory that is based on understanding a firm's exchange relationships between consumers and other stakeholder groups. There are two types of relationship marketing concepts: Market-Based RM which is consumer-oriented and Network-Based RM which is inter-organizational-oriented (Moller & Halinen, 2000). This study is geared towards the

Network-Based, inter-organizational-oriented theory of relationship marketing. According to an analysis of the roots and direction of the theory of relationship marketing by Moller and Halinen (2002) of the inter-organizational-oriented concept of RM, the actions of stakeholders are shaped by both competition and co-operation. These relationships are also highly complex in nature and require a high level of mutual understanding.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship marketing as "all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relationship exchanges" (p.22). Building such a relationship will ensure that both parties receive return business from intention and word-of-mouth. The principal of any successful marketing or business transaction lies in the successful relationship exchanges between stakeholders. The ability of a firm to develop trust and its performance with its partners or stakeholders and to establish itself as an attractive business partner is what developing profitable business relationships depends on (Grönroos, 1999). Most relevant to this study, Sheth and Parvatiyar (1994) defined relationship marketing as "the understanding, explanation, and management of the on-going collaborative business relationship". Relationships, interaction, and networks are what Gummesson (1994; Gronroos, 1999) defined the concept of relationship marketing to be based on.

Speaking of Networks, Morgan and Hunt (1994) describes it as "a group of independently owned and managed firms that agree to be partners…they engage in cooperative behaviors and coordinate activities…", meaning that to gain a competitive advantage in any industry, a network of organizations with shared objectives and values should be willing to work together to strengthen their relationship through interaction,

commitment, and trust, as the success of each partner will depend on the success of the networks. The components of the relationship marketing orientation (Sin, Tse, Yau, Lee & Chow, 2002) are *Trust*, which is the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. It is also the level to which each party feels they can rely on the integrity of the promises offered by the other; *Bonding*, which is when the two parties involved in the exchange act in a unified manner towards the desired goal. This helps to remove doubt and build trust by creating a sense of loyalty and belonging; *Communication*, which is the formal and informal exchanges and sharing of meaningful and timely communication. This component helps build trust, and cooperation enforces the party's commitment and helps them to respond to opportunities and threats; *Shared value*, which is the extent to which partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals, and policies are important or unimportant, and right or wrong and having shared values makes partners more committed to the relationship; *Empathy* enables partners to see situations from the other person's perspective. It is a test instrument for service quality and helps to build and maintain a business relationship; *Reciprocity* is the component of the relationship that causes either party to make allowances for the other in return for similar allowances or favors to be received later. Reciprocity speaks of interdependency, mutual benefits, and equality. (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Brunner, Chen, Sun & Zhou, 1990; Callaghan, McPhail & Yau, 1995; Hinde, Finkenauer & Aughagen 2001; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Lebra, 1976).

Collaboration. Collaborate as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is, "to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It is also defined in the Cambridge dictionary as, "the situation of two or

more people working together to create or achieve the same thing" and in business English as, "the act of working together with other people or organizations to create or achieve something." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). These definitions give a general understanding of what collaboration is.

Theoretically, Williams (2015), in the book Advancing Collaboration Theory by Morrison and Miller-Stevens (2015) mentions how Barbara Gray in her 1985 article on "Facilitating Inter-Organizational Collaboration" emphasized on the need to promote collaborative problem solving across various sectors of society and how these efforts require focusing on how stakeholders are linked in the inter-organizational domain. Gray's work based on inter-organizational domain, became the foundation for more research and the exploration of more theoretical and practical implications of the idea and brought to bear different perspectives on the study of collaboration. Researchers over the last three decades have come up with many different definitions of the phenomenon but no clear definition has been developed to suit all fields of study or practice (Williams, 2015; Morrison and Miller-Stevens, 2016).

To further understand the phenomenon of collaboration, one must first understand the meaning of the term "domain". This refers to "the set of actors that become joined by a common problem of interest." (Gray, 1985; Williams, 2015, p. 17; Morrison& Miller-Stevens, 2016). Some early collaboration frameworks were represented using the system approach of input-process-output and showing the relationships between these parts or the causal linkages between them, others only focus on the process aspect (Williams 2015; Miller-Stevens & Morrison, 2015). The inputs refer to the antecedent variables or preconditions of collaboration. The process aspect was described by Gray (1985) as

"collaborative forms". Output, as its name suggests refers to the outcome of the collaboration. Collaboration, however, may not always produce successful outcomes. It may fail at its objectives and can only be said to be successful as long as the actors or stakeholders are involved in the process intended to result in action or decision (Wood & Gray, 1991). In another study by Roberts and Bradley (1991; Wood &Gray, 1991), Collaboration was defined as having occurred "when an interactive process having a shared transformational purpose and characterized by the explicit voluntary membership, joint decision making, agreed upon rules and a temporary structure" (p.143). This definition was explained by Wood and Gray (1991) to cover the precondition-process-outcome system template. A review of eight other definitions, all based on Gray's definition, led to the creation of this general theory of collaboration which answers the question: Who is doing what, with what means, towards which ends, and covers all observable forms of the phenomenon and excludes irrelevant issues:

"Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engages in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain." (p. 146).

Wood and Gray (1991) explained the precondition phase as being the "shared trans-mutational purpose" (p.144), meaning that, there must be a problem that needs solving, that no single organization acting unilaterally can achieve. Stakeholders must, therefore, have an interest in the problem to be involved in. Although they may have shared interests, they maintain the power to make decisions independently. In the case of venue managers and meeting planners, this phase is when meeting planners reach out to venue managers with their requirements such as the type of meeting and size and venue

managers respond with their ability to meet this requirement. Meeting planners cannot host meetings without a venue and venue managers cannot sell their spaces with meeting planners.

The process aspect of the definition points to the explicit voluntary membership, joint decision making, agreed upon rules and a temporary structure. This aspect of collaboration speaks of interaction between actors, whereby, there is some form of negotiation and agreement on the objectives of working together, expected outcomes and the rules, norms, and structure of the interaction for the duration of the collaboration. During this stage, the resources, processes, decisions, and actions of stakeholders must be geared towards issues related to the problem domain, which brought them together. Again, in the case of venue managers and meeting planners, this will be the phase were venue managers and meeting planners discuss in detail what the meeting to be hosted entails. The needs of the planners and their attendees will be discussed, the offerings of the venue will also be discussed, and a contract will be signed based on agreed-upon rules, policies, and commitments.

The outcomes or output aspect points to the result of the collaboration process. For examples, the reason for which venue managers and meeting planners will work together is to produce a successful event, to the satisfaction of clients and attendees. Whether or not they achieve this goal, is the outcome of the collaboration between them. The competencies, experience, and judgment of a variety of professionals are brought together in real time in a collaboration.

Successful collaboration is also often determined by the organizational settings of actors. The work environments, team resources, administrative support and structure and

values of individual organizations and their communication and coordination mechanisms are attributes favorable for collaboration and its outcomes. Maintaining professional territories, however, is one of the factors that limit its development (D'Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin Rodriguez & Beaulieu, 2005).

Summary

The concepts of shared objectives/goals, mutuality understanding, communication, trust, shared resources, transparency and respect all run through the theories of co-creation, relationship marketing, and collaboration.

In the case of meeting planners and venue managers, collaboration and dialogue are used in co-production to integrate shared resources into value configuration (Ranjan & Read, 2014). To effectively work together to produce the desired meeting, meeting planners and venue managers must develop successful relationships and be able to effectively utilize resources available to them. Effective relationships lead to customer loyalty, which leads to increased revenue, lower costs of repeat business, reduced customer acquisition, and greater profitability. (Lam, Shankar, Erramilli & Murthy, 2004). As venue managers compete to sell their space and support services, meeting planners also compete to host meetings, rent spaces and attract attendees. These require marketing strategies that are effective when strong relationships are built and properly maintained. Effective co-creation, collaboration and relationship marketing consequently, enhance the ability to promote meetings and the individual capabilities of stakeholders. Below is a proposed model to support this statement.

Figure 2. 2 Outcome of Effective Co-Creative Ventures

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, co-creation, relationship marketing and, collaboration is used to represent value creation for attendees through the interaction of venue managers and meeting planners

Chapter Three

Methodology

Target Population

  Due to the structure of the meeting industry, meeting planners and venue managers are one of the most basic stakeholders involved in the execution of successful meetings. Therefore, the target population of this study was defined as convention center managers and meeting planners (eighteen years old and above) who host meetings in the United States. Thus, the sample is made up of participants with these titles.

Sampling and Data Collection

  A random sample of meeting planners and venue managers were contacted through email addresses gathered from the staff directories of some convention centers, the membership directories of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), Meetings Professional International (MPI) chapters, and through the Convention and Visitors Bureaus of some states within the United States. These four channels were used because they include the most prominent associations in the industry and provided access to the specific participants needed for the study. All participants contacted had the title of either venue manager, general manager, convention services manager, convention center manager, meeting planner, event coordinator or event manager. Of these, 53 meeting planners were contacted through PCMA, one MPI Chapter and one Convention and Visitors Bureau. 298 email addresses of general managers, event managers/coordinators, and convention services managers/directors were gathered from the staff directories of convention centers in the United States.

Data collection was done by sending emails directly to participants through Qualtrics software and by the researcher with a brief self-introduction and purpose of the email with a URL to the survey. The URL led to the Qualtrics survey, which had a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, the conditions for taking the survey, the rights of participants (Appendix A) and the questionnaire (Appendix B). A reminder (Appendix C) was sent a week through Qualtrics. Due to low number responses, personal emails were sent a week after the first reminder. Time and cost savings are two of the benefits of using the internet as a survey medium (Weber, 2001). It was possible to determine within minutes whether the email with the link to the survey had been delivered to the specific recipient or not.

Research Design and Instrument Development

Quantitative methods are established upon precise measurements of variables, hypothesis tests and statistical analyses of data. (Matveev, 2002). Qualitative methods, on the other hand, delve deeper into research problems, by obtaining in-depth information, analyzing words, and building intricate and rounded representations of phenomena in the inquiry (Cresswell, 1998). Both methods of data collection were used in this study in the form of survey questionnaires to obtain the information required to answer the research questions. The mixed method was used instead of each method alone to provide a more complete understanding of the issue being researched (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013), that is, the role of venue managers and meeting planners in the meeting planning process by offering first-hand accounts of their perspectives of necessary meeting attributes of who they work with, the facility and of their relationships. The most common method of

collecting data from a large group of participants on their opinions and attitudes is through questionnaires (Gass, Mackey & Ross-Feldman, 2005).

The questionnaire was designed using the Qualtrics software and employed both closed and open-ended questions to prompt, in depth, the nature of informants' subjective opinions as venue managers and meeting planners. This tool was used as it had the advantage of being easy to distribute through a web link. The design of the questionnaire could be edited to look attractive and participants can simply "submit" a completed form after making selections from a predefined series of answers.

Whether researchers have found what they claim to have discovered and the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other populations is what validity is concerned with (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1991). Reliability as defined by Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1991, p.271), is the "stability of research results and their ability to be replicated by other researchers.". To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was distributed to more than one venue manager and meeting planner, and the findings were based on participant's descriptions to ensure that the aims of the research were met. The questionnaire was divided into six sections and utilized a seven-point Likert Scale (Ajzen, 2002; Sparks, 2007) form of measurement to collect and organize the data. The importance of the listed partner and facility attributes were rated on a scale of one to seven and weighted, (1= not at all important, 2= not important, 3= slightly unimportant, 4= neither unimportant not important, 5= slightly important, 6= important, 7= extremely important). The relationship attributes, though not utilizing a point scale, were rated from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The paragraphs below describe each section of the survey instrument.

Table 3. 1 Questionnaire

Section	Number of Questions
Screening	2
Roles	4
Relationship Assessment	13
Partner Attributes	12
Facility Attributes	26
Demographics	10

Screening questions

This section includes two screening questions with the purpose of receiving responses from the intended sample. The first question asked the age of the participant, and if he or she was not 18 years or older, the participant was directed to the end of the survey. If this was not the case, the participant could move on to the next question which asked about the title of the respondent. The title options were; venue/ convention services manager, meeting planner and other (with a text option).

Roles

This section of the survey was designed as an open-ended section, to give participants the opportunity to describe their roles and experiences. Questions asked under this section was for them to describe their job function, their opinion about the role a person in their position played in producing successful meetings and whether their relationships with their fellow stakeholder is co-creative/ collaborative.

Relationship assessment

The relationship assessment section of the study included 13 questions which were designed to assess the strength of the relationship between stakeholders and their willingness to engage in co-creative and collaborative activities. These questions were adapted from studies on the three theories discussed and were based on the basic concepts of these theories; trust, respect, willingness, communication, interaction, transparency, shared objectives/goals, mutuality understanding, and shared resources (Grönroos, 2004; Gustafsson, Kristensson & Witell. 2012; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ranjan & Read, 2016; Schilling & Phelps, 2007; Snehota, 1995; Yi & Gong, 2013).

Table 3. 2 Relationship assessment measurement scale

Trust/ Willingness
I am willing to commit to a co-creative or collaborative process
I am confident in and trust the competency and experience of the _____ I work with
Understanding/ Respect
I am understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the ____ I work with
Transparency/ Shared resources
I communicate with ___ to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience
The _____ communicates with me to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience
Comprehensive information pertaining to risks and benefits of working together is clearly communicated
Communication/ Interaction
Communication between myself and the _____ is efficient
Multiple lines of communication are available for both parties to gather input and ideas
Bonding/Shared values and objectives
The ____ provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.
I provide the _____ with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions
_____ is treated as an equal partner in sharing information and resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience

Attributes

This section of the survey instrument included 12 items (competence of self, competence of partner, reputation, communication skills, experience, mutual respect, consistency, individual personality, responsiveness to unexpected problems, working relationship, flexibility and accessibility) on attributes important to the hosting of a successful event that either of the stakeholders should possess. Participants were asked to rate these attributes based on their opinion of their fellow stakeholders and how it will affect their relationship towards achieving their goals. This part of the survey also included 25 item attributes about the facility, geared towards meeting planners and 24 geared towards venue managers. These attributes were gathered from both past and current research studies and trade publications (Boo, Koh, & Jones, 2008; Breiter & Milman, 2006; Choi, 2004; Fawzy & Samra, 2008; Jones, 2008; Nelson & Rys, 2000; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Skift, 2017).

Table 3. 3 Partner and Venue and Destination Attributes

Partner Attributes	Competence of self, Responsiveness to unexpected problems, Communication skills, Competence of partner, Working relationship, Flexibility, Accessibility, Mutual respect, Consistency, Experience, Reputation, Individual personality
Venue and Destination Attributes	Safety and Security, Friendliness of Staff, Quality of catering services, Quality of meeting space, Availability of on-site catering services, Meeting room rates, Venue accessibility, Capacity of meeting rooms, Suitability of venue to meeting type, Availability of technological resources, Availability of accommodation, Quality of support services, Location of venue, Timely, readable and accurate billing, Suitability of meeting, Quality of convenience services, Parking, Number of meeting rooms, Service development and innovation, Re-booking simplicity, Image/ Reputation, Promotional appeal, Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses, Business benefits, Cost/ Value of hosting meeting, Appeal of destination

Demographics

The demographics section of the study, which was the final portion of the survey, included nine questions on gender, age, level of education, industry experience, certification, the average size of meetings planned or hosted, and an average number of meetings planned or hosted.

Data Analysis

The Qualtrics software was used to design and distribute the survey instrument so the same software was to analyze the data. First, the data was cleaned by filtering out the surveys that had less than fifty percent completion rates. Out of 33 responses received, only 18 were completely answered. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the open-ended questions to identify and record patterns. This is a form of analysis done by being familiar with the data by reading over it repeatedly and taking notes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the low response rate, it was easy to use this method of analysis to analyze these parts of the study. When analyzing the quantitative data, tallied frequencies and percentages calculated in Qualtrics were used to provide a clear picture of the demographics of the participants and on what was least and most common in the relationship assessment and attribute sections. T-tests were then calculated using SPSS to determine the differences, if any, between the perspectives of venue managers and meeting planners based on their responses. Although the size of the sample was small for comparison, De Winter (2013), investigated the feasibility of performing a t-test on samples of $N \leq 5$, based on previous studies from various authors in different fields of study, which indicated that such a study could be conducted for extremely small sample sizes in various conditions. The study conducted by De Winter (2013) founded on these previous studies, indicated that there was "no fundamental objection to using a regular t-

test…" (p. 6) on samples of extremely small size. The Qualtrics software presented these results in charts and tables. Before conducting any t-tests, the responses from venue managers was merged with that of "other", as they were essentially managers of convention centers. Finally, the results of the survey were compared to the secondary research presented in the literature review.

Chapter Four

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Nineteen useful responses were received for this portion of the survey. Seven of these responses were from participants who received the link to the survey anonymously and twelve were from participants who received the survey through direct email. Of this number, 55.56% were female and 44.44% were male. 27.78% were between the ages of 46-55, 22.22% were between 26-35, 22.22% were between 56-65, 16.67% were between 36-45, 5.56% were between 18-25 and another 5.56% were over 65 years respectively. The highest level of education among the respondents was a *bachelor's degree* (55.56%), the second recorded level of education was a *graduate/ postgraduate degree or above* (33.33%) and the lowest level of education recorded was *some college but no degree* (11.11%). The respondents had a varying number of industry experience ranging from one to forty-five years with an average number of years recorded being 19 years. Participants of the survey were asked to classify the level of their position in their organization's hierarchy and based on their responses, 38.89% was *upper management*, 27.78% were *middle management*, 27.78% was *junior management* and 5.56% was *trained professional*. 77.78% of the participants responded "*No*" to having any industry certification. Of the 22.22% who responded "*Yes*", the certifications participants listed as having were Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), Digital Event Strategists (DES) and Certified Venue Professional (CVP). Participants were also asked the number of years they had been employed in their current position, and their responses ranged from a year to 14 years, with an average number of years recorded being 5 years. of When asked about their average meeting size over the last year, 38.89% responded to having an

average meeting size ranging from 501-1000, 27.78% responded to having an average

meeting size ranging from 1001-5000, 16.67% had an average meeting size of 5001-

10,000, 5.56% had an average size of 50-100, 5.56% had an average size of 101-500 and

another 5.56% had an average size of more than 10,000 (see Table 4.1).

Table 4. 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	8	44.44%
Female	10	55.56%
Age		
18-25	1	5.56%
26-35	4	22.22%
36-45	3	16.67%
46-55	5	27.78%
55-65	4	22.22%
65+	1	5.56%
Education Level		
High school graduate/ secondary School or less	0	0.00%
Some college but no degree	2	11.11%
Diploma/ Associates degree	0	0.00%
Bachelor's degree	10	55.56%
Graduate/Postgraduate degree or above	6	33.33%
Other (please specify)	0	0.00%
Level of position		
Upper management	7	38.89%
Middle management	5	27.78%
Junior management	5	27.78%
Trained professional	1	5.56%
Private/Independent	0	0.00%
Other (please specify)	0	0.00%
Certification		
Yes (CMP, DES, CVP)	4	22.22%
No	14	77.78%
Average size of meetings in the past year		
<50	0	0.00%
50-100	1	5.56%
101-500	1	5.56%
501-1000	7	38.89%
1001-5000	5	27.78%
5001-10,000	3	5.56%
10,000+	1	5.56%

Roles

Of the 19 participants who answered the question "I am_____" 63.16% selected Venue/ Convention Services Managers, 21.05% selected Meeting planners and 15.79% selected the category "other" (Table 4.2). The responses for the category "Other" were General Manager, Convention Center General Manager and Convention Center Director. These roles were merged with that of Venue/ Convention Services Manager, for analysis.

Table 4. 2 Job Titles of Respondents

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Venue/ Convention Services Manager	12	63.16%
Meeting Planner	4	21.05%
Other (please specify)	3	15.79%

To answer the first object of the research, which is to define the roles of venue and convention services managers and meeting planners, respondents were asked to describe their job functions and the role a person in their position plays in the success of a meeting. The following responses were given (see Table 4.3).

Table 4. 3 Job Functions and Roles

Venue Managers/ Other
•"I am the primary operations and planning contact for meeting, convention, and trade show managers using our facility"
•"Key position. The link between the client and all departments within the convention center"
•"Liaison between our facility and the client"
•"I work hand in hand with Event Managers to ensure our clients' events and meetings come together as they have envisioned. From drawing a computer-aided design and drafting (CADD) diagrams and creating service orders to monitoring the event as it happens and addressing pop-up issues, we make sure everything regarding the meeting/event runs smoothly."
•"Our team hosts meeting planners and work with each of them to create a unique convention and/or trade show experience utilizing exhibit halls and meeting rooms"

Table 4.3 (Continued)

> •"Helping to promote their event to future/current attendees"
> •"As a venue manager, we help provide the "dream" or vision that the event producer has for their event. We provide an experience that includes a beautiful setting, excellent service and truly become part of their event team."
> •"Oversee all departments of the convention center"
> •"Managing the successful logistics of events at a convention center"
> •"Oversee that rules and regulations are followed and providing a successful experience for our guests and clients"
> •Integral to ensuring the group has conducive space and complies with legal"
> •"I play an important role, but it is not all up to me"
> •"I play an important role in client's meetings/events; I have to be wherever they need me to be when they need me to address and correct anything that goes wrong during the course of the event."
> •"All communication between the meeting planner and the convention center staff and department flows through me"
> •"Oversee the sales, event, set up and production staff while working with customer and Convention and Visitor's Bureau.
> "Vital in ensuring that all needs are met from the venue perspective"
>
> **Meeting Planners**
> •"Plan meetings for up to 1000 people; handle exhibit halls of 30 booths"
> •"Plan conferences, source venues and approve venue/speaker contracts"
> •"Key player- we know all the details from beginning to end."
> •"It is my primary responsibility."
> •"Essential"

Relationship Assessment

To meet the second research objective, which is to assess the relationship between the venue managers and meeting planners, a series of questions were asked based on the co-creation, collaborative and relationship marketing concepts of trust, respect, willingness, communication, interaction, transparency, shared objectives, mutual understanding, and shared resources. First, participants were asked if their relationship with their fellow stakeholder was co-creative or collaborative, and they were asked to respond based on their individual perspectives. Most of the respondents (84.21%) responded "YES" and 15.79% responded, "NO" (see Table 4.4).

33

Table 4. 4 Defining the relationship

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	84.21%
No	3	15.79%

Respondents were then asked to describe their relationship if it was not co-creative or collaborative. Responses given were as follows;

"Dictatorial"

"Our job is to meet their needs, but only according to our building policies and standards."

"Service"

One responded, although responded yes, commented that "while both definitions are true, at the end of the day the customer drives more of the agenda and purpose. It is our job as a venue to understand their needs and demonstrate how our facility can help them achieve their goals."

From the responses to the relationship assessment section, "*I am understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the ____ I work with*" ($M=6.63$), "*I communicate with the ___ to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience*" ($M=6.58$), and "*___ is treated as an equal partner in sharing information and resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience*" ($M=6.47$) were the top three statements that participants agreed to. "*Multiple lines of communications are available for both parties to gather input and ideas*" ($M=5.32$), "*The _____ provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions*" ($M=5.32$) and "*The ___ communicates with me to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience*" ($M=5.47$) were the least statements that participants agreed to (see Table 4.5).

Table 4. 5 Descriptive results of responses of relationship assessment

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD.
The success of a meeting is greatly influenced by the relationship between Venue Managers and Meeting Planners.	19	1	7	.00	.826
I am willing to commit to a co-creative or collaborative process.	19	1	7	.11	.487
I am confident in and trust the competency and experience of the partner I work with.	19	4	7	.63	.012
Communication between myself and _____ is efficient.	19	4	7	.89	.737
I am understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the _____ I work with.	**19**	**6**	**7**	**.63**	.496
I communicate with the _____ to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience.	**19**	**5**	**7**	**.58**	.607
The ___ communicates with me to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience	19	2	7	.47	.16
Multiple lines of communications are available for both parties to gather input and ideas.	19	5	7	.32	.749
Comprehensive information pertaining to the risks and benefits of working together is clearly communicated.	19	3	7	.32	.204
The _____ provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.	19	4	7	.32	.749
I provide the ___ with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions	19	5	7	.37	.67
_____ is treated as an equal partner in sharing information and resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience.	**19**	**6**	**7**	**.47**	**.513**
Valid N (listwise)	19				

After conducting paired t-tests to compare the two group's (i.e. managers and planners) responses, it was found that there was significant difference in perceptions of venue managers and meeting planners on *(a)* question #6 "*I communicate with ____ to provide and receive input on improving meeting experience*" with *p*-value 0.27 and *(b)* question #10 "*The _____ provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully*

35

informed decisions" with *p*-value 0.036 ($\alpha = 0.05$). Venue managers ranked question #6 higher (M=6.73, SD=0.458) than meeting planners (M=6.00, SD= 0.816). Meeting planners ranked question #10 higher (M = 6.00, SD = 0.000) than venue managers (M=5.13; SD=0.743).

Table 4. 6 Comparison of perspectives on relationship assessment

		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
The success of a meeting is greatly influenced by the relationship between Venue Managers and Meeting Planners.	Venue Manager	15	.87	.031	.367	.553
	Meeting Planner	4	.50	.577		
	Total	19	.00	.826		
As a _____, I am willing to commit to a co-creative or collaborative process.	Venue Manager	15	.20	.656	.278	.605
	Meeting Planner	4	5.75	.500		
	Total	19	6.11	1.487		
As a _____, I am confident in and trust the competency and experience of the [QID3-ChoiceGroup-UnselectedChoices] I work with.	Venue Manager	15	5.53	1.060	.659	.428
	Meeting Planner	4	6.00	.816		
	Total	19	5.63	1.012		
Communication between myself and _____ is efficient.	Venue Manager	15	5.87	.834	.098	.758
	Meeting Planner	4	6.00	.000		
	Total	19	5.89	.737		
I am understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the _____ I work with.	Venue Manager	15	6.67	.488	.344	.565
	Meeting Planner	4	6.50	.577		
	Total	19	6.63	.496		
I communicate with the _____ to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience.	Venue Manager	15	**6.73**	.458	5.852	**.027**
	Meeting Planner	4	**6.00**	.816		

Table 4.6 (continued)

Item	Group	N	Mean	SD		
	Total	19	6.58			
Multiple lines of communications are available for both parties to gather input and ideas.	Venue Manager	15	6.33	.816	.037	.850
	Meeting Planner	4	6.25	.500		
	Total	19	6.32	.749		
Comprehensive information pertaining to the risks and benefits of working together is clearly communicated.	Venue Manager	15	5.33	1.234	.014	.906
	Meeting Planner	4	5.25	1.258		
	Total	19	5.32	1.204		
The _____ provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.	Venue Manager	15	**5.13**	.743	5.214	**.036**
	Meeting Planner	4	**6.00**	.000		
	Total	19	5.32	.749		
_____ is treated as an equal partner in sharing information and resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience	Meeting Planner	15	6.47	.516	.013	.912
	Total	4	6.50	.577		
	Venue Manager	19	6.47	.513		

NOTE: p-value<0.05

Attributes

Partner Attributes

Eighteen useful responses were received for this section of the survey. To list the attributes founded on the level of importance from extremely important =7 to not at all important =1, the means and standard deviations of the responses were calculated for all the data collected by the Qualtrics software, and then for the individual categories. Overall, the three most important attributes were the *competence of self* (*M*=6.67), *responsiveness to unexpected problems* (*M*=6.67) *and communication skills* (*M*=6.61). (See Table 4.7).

Table 4. 7 Descriptive results of partner attributes

Attributes	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Frequency
Competence of self	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**18**
Responsiveness to unexpected problems	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**18**
Communication skills	**6.61**	**0.59**	**5.00**	**7.00**	**18**
Competence of partner	6.56	0.50	6.00	7.00	18
Working relationship	6.56	0.60	5.00	7.00	18
Flexibility	6.56	0.68	5.00	7.00	18
Accessibility	6.44	0.76	5.00	7.00	18
Mutual respect	6.28	0.80	4.00	7.00	18
Consistency	6.22	0.85	4.00	7.00	18
Experience	6.00	0.82	4.00	7.00	18
Reputation	5.50	1.07	4.00	7.00	18
Individual personality	5.50	1.07	4.00	7.00	18

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the attributes listed and suggest attributes that could or should have been included. Two participants included the *ability to connect meeting planner with local convention and visitor's bureau, knowledge of other facilities for off-site events and ability to handle stressful situations"*

To tailor these responses to the individual perspectives of the researcher's target population. The responses were recorded under their individual categories as well. The three most important attributes to venue managers based on the responses were communication skills (*M=6.83*), the competence of self (*M=6.75*) and responsiveness to unexpected problems (*M=6.67*).

Table 4. 8 Descriptive result of partner attributes from venue manager perspective

Attributes	Mean	Std. dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Frequency
Communication skills	**6.83**	**0.37**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**12**
Competence of self	**6.75**	**0.43**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**12**
Responsiveness to unexpected problems	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**12**
Working relationship	**6.67**	**0.62**	**5.00**	**7.00**	**12**

Table 4.8 (continued)

Flexibility	**6.67**	**0.62**	**5.00**	**7.00**	**12**
Competence of partner	6.58	0.49	6.00	7.00	12
Accessibility	6.58	0.64	5.00	7.00	12
Mutual respect	6.42	0.64	5.00	7.00	12
Consistency	6.25	0.92	4.00	7.00	12
Experience	6.08	0.86	4.00	7.00	12
Individual personality	5.58	1.04	4.00	7.00	12
Reputation	5.33	1.11	4.00	7.00	12

The three top partner attributes based on meeting planner responses were responsiveness to unexpected problems $M=6.67$), accessibility ($M=6.67$), and flexibility ($M=6.33$). All remaining attributes were rated the same.

Table 4. 9 Descriptive result of relationship attributes from meeting planner perspective

Attributes	Mean	Std. dev	Minimum	Maximum	Frequency
Responsiveness to unexpected problems	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**3**
Accessibility	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**3**
Competence of self	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Competence of partner	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Communication skills	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Working relationship	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Mutual respect	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Flexibility	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Consistency	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Experience	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Reputation	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3
Individual personality	6.33	0.47	6.00	7.00	3

The three top attributes from the perspectives of the other three participants were responsiveness to unexpected problems ($M=6.67$), competency of self ($M=6.67$) and competency of partner ($M=6.67$).

Table 4. 10 List of partner attributes from the perspective of "other"

Attributes	Mean	Std. dev	Minimum	Maximum	Frequency
Responsiveness to unexpected problems	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**3**
Competency of self	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**3**
Competence of partner	**6.67**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**3**
Working relationship	**6.33**	**0.47**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**3**
Communication skills	6.00	0.82	5.00	7.00	3
Flexibility	6.00	0.82	5.00	7.00	3
Consistency	6.00	0.82	5.00	7.00	3
Accessibility	5.67	0.94	5.00	7.00	3
Mutual respect	5.67	1.25	4.00	7.00	3
Experience	5.33	0.47	5.00	6.00	3
Reputation	5.33	0.94	4.00	6.00	3
Individual personality	4.33	0.47	4.00	5.00	3

After conducting paired t-tests to compare the two group's responses, it was found that there was no significant difference in perceptions of venue managers and meeting planners on partner attributes.

Table 4. 11 Comparison of perspectives on partner attributes

As a ___ How will you rate the importance of the following partner attributes to the hosting of successful meetings?		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Competence of self	Venue Manager	15	6.73	.458	1.778	.201
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.67	.485		
Competence of _____	Venue Manager	15	6.60	.507	.667	.426
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.56	.511		
Reputation	Venue Manager	15	5.33	1.113	2.222	.155
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	5.50	1.098		
Communication skills	Venue Manager	15	6.67	.617	.741	.402
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		

Table 4.11 (continued)

	Total	18	6.61	.608		
Experience	Venue Manager	15	5.93	.884	.552	.468
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.00	.840		
Mutual Respect	Venue Manager	15	6.27	.884	.015	.903
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.28	.826		
Consistency	Venue Manager	15	6.20	.941	.054	.818
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.22	.878		
Individual Personality	Venue Manager	15	5.33	1.113	2.222	.155
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	5.50	1.098		
Responsiveness to unexpected problems	Venue Manager	15	6.67	.488	.000	1.000
	Venue Manager	3	6.67	.577		
	Total	18	6.67	.485		
Working relationship	Venue Manager	15	6.60	.632	.454	.510
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.56	.616		
Flexibility Flexibility	Venue Manager	15	6.53	.743	.085	.775
	Meeting Planner	3	6.67	.577		
	Venue Manager	15	6.53	.743		

NOTE: Responses of venue managers and "other" were merged. *p*-value<0.05

Venue and Destination Attributes

Eighteen useful responses were received for this section of the survey as well. To list the attributes based on the level of importance from extremely important to least important, the means and standard deviation of the responses were used for all the data collected, then for the individual categories. Overall, the three most important attributes were *safety and security* (*M*=6.61)*, friendliness of staff* (*M*=6.44) *and quality of catering services* (*M*=6.44) (see Table 4.12).

Table 4. 12 Descriptive results of the venue and destination attributes

Attributes	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Count
Safety and Security	**5.00**	**7.00**	**6.61**	**0.59**	**18**
Friendliness of Staff	**5.00**	**7.00**	**6.44**	**0.68**	**18**
Quality of catering services	**4.00**	**7.00**	**6.44**	**0.83**	**18**
Quality of meeting space	5.00	7.00	6.39	0.68	18
Availability of on-site catering services	4.00	7.00	6.39	0.76	18
Meeting room rates	6.00	7.00	6.33	0.47	3
Venue accessibility	5.00	7.00	6.28	0.65	18
Capacity of meeting rooms	5.00	7.00	6.22	0.71	18
Suitability of venue to meeting type	4.00	7.00	6.11	0.66	18
Availability of technological resources	5.00	7.00	6.11	0.74	18
Availability of accommodation	5.00	7.00	6.11	0.99	18
Quality of support services	5.00	7.00	6.06	0.78	18
Location of venue	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.67	18
Timely, readable and accurate billing	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.75	18
Suitability of meeting	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	18
Quality of convenience services	5.00	7.00	5.94	0.78	18
Parking	2.00	7.00	5.78	1.36	18
Number of meeting rooms	1.00	7.00	5.72	1.41	18
Service development and innovation	4.00	7.00	5.67	0.94	18
Re-booking simplicity	3.00	7.00	5.61	1.16	18
Image/ Reputation	3.00	7.00	5.56	1.01	18
Promotional appeal	4.00	7.00	5.50	1.07	18
Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses	1.00	7.00	5.39	1.38	18
Business benefits	3.00	7.00	5.28	1.10	18
Cost/ Value of hosting meeting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Appeal of destination	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the attributes listed and suggest attributes that could or should have been included. Two participants included *a connected hotel to the convention center and scheduling site visits that work for both meeting planner and center before booking the flights or hotel rooms.*

To tailor these attributes to the individual needs perspectives of the researcher's target population the responses were recorded under their individual categories as well.

The three most important attributes to venue managers based on the responses were *safety and security* (*M*=6.58)*, friendliness of staff* (*M*=6.50) *and quality of meeting space* (*M*=6.50) (see Table 4.13).

Table 4. 13 Venue and destination attributes from the perspective of venue managers

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Safety and Security	**5.00**	**7.00**	**6.58**	**0.64**	**12**
Friendliness of Staff	**5.00**	**7.00**	**6.50**	**0.65**	**12**
Quality of meeting space	**5.00**	**7.00**	**6.50**	**0.65**	**12**
Quality of catering services	4.00	7.00	6.42	0.95	12
Availability of on-site catering services	4.00	7.00	6.33	0.85	12
Venue accessibility	5.00	7.00	6.33	0.62	12
Suitability of venue to meeting type	5.00	7.00	6.25	0.60	12
Capacity of meeting rooms	5.00	7.00	6.25	0.72	12
Availability of accommodation	4.00	7.00	6.17	1.14	12
Quality of support services	5.00	7.00	6.17	0.80	12
Availability of technological resources	5.00	7.00	6.08	0.76	12
Number of meeting rooms	4.00	7.00	6.08	0.86	12
Suitability of meeting	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	12
Quality of convenience services	5.00	7.00	5.92	0.86	12
Location of venue	5.00	7.00	5.92	0.64	12
Timely, readable and accurate billing	5.00	7.00	5.92	0.76	12
Parking	2.00	7.00	5.92	1.32	12
Service development and innovation	4.00	7.00	5.75	0.92	12
Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses	4.00	7.00	5.67	1.03	12
Image/ Reputation	3.00	7.00	5.67	1.11	12
Re-booking simplicity	3.00	7.00	5.58	1.26	12
Promotional appeal	4.00	7.00	5.42	1.11	12
Business benefits	3.00	7.00	5.25	1.09	12
Cost/ Value of hosting meeting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Appeal of destination	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Meeting room rates	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

Meeting planners rated many as the same importance, with over half the attributes receiving the same high mean value (*M=6.33*). (Table 4.14).

Table 4. 14 Venue and destination attributes from the meeting planner perspective

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Friendliness of Staff	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Quality of catering services	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Availability of on-site catering services	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Promotional appeal	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Quality of convenience services	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Quality of support services	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Suitability of venue to meeting type	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Location of venue	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Venue accessibility	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Suitability of meeting	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Meeting room rates	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Timely, readable and accurate billing	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Availability of technological resources	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Safety and Security	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Capacity of meeting rooms	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Quality of meeting space	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Availability of accommodation	5.00	6.00	5.67	0.47	3
Business benefits	4.00	7.00	5.67	1.25	3
Service development and innovation	4.00	7.00	5.67	1.25	3
Re-booking simplicity	4.00	7.00	5.67	1.25	3
Image/ Reputation	5.00	6.00	5.33	0.47	3
Parking	3.00	7.00	5.00	1.63	3
Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses	1.00	6.00	4.33	2.36	3
Cost/ Value of hosting meeting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

Table 4.14 (continued)

Appeal of destination	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

From the perspective of the "other" category, the three top attributes were *safety and security* (*M*=7.00)*, quality of catering services* (*M*=6.67) *and availability of on-site catering service* (*M*=6.67) (Table 4.15).

Table 4. 15 Venue and destination attributes from the perspective of "other"

Field	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Safety and Security	**7.00**	**7.00**	**7.00**	**0.00**	**3**
Quality of catering services	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.67**	**0.47**	**3**
Availability of on-site catering services	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.67**	**0.47**	**3**
Friendliness of Staff	**5.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.94**	**3**
Availability of accommodation	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Quality of meeting space	**6.00**	**7.00**	**6.33**	**0.47**	**3**
Location of venue	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Venue accessibility	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Timely, readable and accurate billing	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Availability of technological resources	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Parking	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Capacity of meeting rooms	5.00	7.00	6.00	0.82	3
Re-booking simplicity	5.00	6.00	5.67	0.47	3
Quality of convenience services	5.00	6.00	5.67	0.47	3
Suitability of meeting	5.00	7.00	5.67	0.94	3
Number of meeting rooms	5.00	7.00	5.67	0.94	3
Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses	5.00	6.00	5.33	0.47	3
Image/ Reputation	4.00	6.00	5.33	0.94	3
Service development and innovation	5.00	6.00	5.33	0.47	3
Quality of support services	5.00	6.00	5.33	0.47	3
Suitability of venue to meeting type	5.00	6.00	5.33	0.47	3
Promotional appeal	4.00	6.00	5.00	0.82	3
Business benefits	4.00	6.00	5.00	0.82	3
Cost/ Value of hosting meeting	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Appeal of destination	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Meeting room rates	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

Again, after conducting paired t-tests to compare the two group's responses, it was found that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of venue managers and meeting planners on venue and destination attributes (see Table 4.16).

Table 4. 16 Comparison of perspectives of venue managers and meeting planners on venue and destination attributes.

As a ____, How will you rate the importance of the following Destination and Venue attributes to the hosting of successful meetings?		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Number of meeting rooms	Venue Manager	15	6.00	.926	3.876	.067
	Meeting Planner	3	4.33	2.887		
	Total	18	5.72	1.447		
Capacity of meeting rooms	Venue Manager	15	6.20	.775	.078	.783
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.22	.732		
Quality of meeting space	Venue Manager	15	6.47	.640	1.126	.304
	Meeting Planner	3	6.00	1.000		
	Total	18	6.39	.698		
Parking	Venue Manager	15	5.93	1.280	1.126	.304
	Meeting Planner	3	5.00	2.000		
	Total	18	5.78	1.396		
Safety and Security	Venue Manager	15	6.67	.617	.741	.402
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.61	.608		
Availability of technological resources	Venue Manager	15	6.07	.799	.296	.594
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.11	.758		
Timely, readable and accurate billing	Venue Manager	15	5.93	.799	.667	.426
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.00	.767		
Suitability of meeting	Venue Manager	15	5.93	.884	.552	.468
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.00	.840		
Venue Accessibility	Venue Manager	15	6.27	.704	.023	.880
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.28	.669		

Table 4.16 (continued)

Location of venue	Venue Manager	15	5.93	.704	.842	.372
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.00	.686		
Suitability of venue to meeting type	Venue Manager	15	6.07	.704	.374	.549
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.11	.676		
Quality of support services	Venue Manager	15	6.00	.845	.417	.528
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.06	.802		
Quality of convenience services	Venue Manager	15	5.87	.834	.838	.374
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	5.94	.802		
Re-booking simplicity	Venue Manager	15	5.60	1.183	.007	.933
	Meeting Planner	3	5.67	1.528		
	Total	18	5.61	1.195		
Service development and innovation	Venue Manager	15	5.67	.900	.000	1.000
	Meeting Planner	3	5.67	1.528		
	Total	18	5.67	.970		
Business benefits	Venue Manager	15	5.20	1.082	.414	.529
	Meeting Planner	3	5.67	1.528		
	Total	18	5.28	1.127		
Image/ Reputation	Venue Manager	15	5.60	1.121	.156	.698
	Meeting Planner	3	5.33	.577		
	Total	18	5.56	1.042		
Promotional appeal	Venue Manager	15	5.33	1.113	2.222	.155
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	5.50	1.098		
Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses	Venue Manager	15	5.60	.986	2.120	.165
	Meeting Planner	3	4.33	2.887		
	Total	18	5.39	1.420		
Availability of on-site catering services	Venue Manager	15	6.40	.828	.017	.897
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.39	.778		
Quality of catering services	Venue Manager	15	6.47	.915	.057	.814
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.44	.856		

Table 4.16 (continued)

Availability of accommodation	Venue Manager	15	6.20	1.082	.667	.426
	Meeting Planner	3	5.67	.577		
	Total	18	6.11	1.023		
Friendliness of Staff	Venue Manager	15	6.47	.743	.085	.775
	Meeting Planner	3	6.33	.577		
	Total	18	6.44	.705		

NOTE: p-value<0.05

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to identify the role of venue managers and meeting planners in the meeting industry; to assess the strength of the relationship between venue managers and meeting planners, to explore important attributes of producing a successful meeting from perspectives of venue managers and meeting planners and to discuss the results of this exploratory study in comparison with previous studies.

Summary of Analysis

The demographic data collected and analyzed indicated that respondents had a lot of experience in the industry from their reported number of years in the industry (19 years avg.) to the number of years employed in their current position (5 years avg.). Majority of the respondent held upper management (38.89%) and middle management (27.78%) positions in their organizations. However, very few of them (22.22%) held any industry certifications which are preferred in today's job market. Despite that fact, the data assured the researcher that perspectives provided were based on in-depth knowledge of the industry and from working with various stakeholders. The highest size of meetings in the past year recorded was between 501-5000 which somehow suggests the level of planning required to make meetings of this size successful.

The researcher was able to identify the roles of venue/convention services managers and meeting planners from analyzing the responses. The job function of venue and convention services managers in the meetings industry is that of overseeing all departments of the Convention Center, managing the successful operations and logistics

of events at the center, acting as the liaison between the facility and clients and the primary contact for persons or groups using their facility. Their role, as described in the responses, in the hosting of successful meetings are significant, integral and essential in that they oversee the sales, event, setup and production staff, ensure that all event needs are met, by hosting meeting planners and working with them to create unique events and provide a successful experience for guests and clients and that rules and regulations are followed from the venue's perspectives. They also help promote events to current and future attendees of events.

The job junction of the meeting planner is that of planning conferences, sourcing venues and approving venue/ speaker contracts. As meeting planner respondents described their roles are vital, essential and key. In that, planning meetings are their primary responsibility and they must know all the details from beginning to end. Grounded on these descriptions, it is clear that each stakeholders' role is essential as they each have a gap to fill.

The literature on relationships provided certain key concepts on which co-creation, collaboration, and relationship marketing are built (Table 5.2). These concepts helped to develop the scale to assess the strength of the relationships between venue managers and meeting planners in the process of producing successful meetings. Their initial response to whether their relationship was collaborative or co-creative yielded very interesting responses. Majority of the participants responded "yes" to this question. From the few who responded "no", a meeting planner described it as *dictatorial.* Venue and convention services managers describe it ultimately as *service.* To know if they believed the kind of relationships they build influences the success of meetings, all stakeholders

either strongly agreed/agreed to this. A comparison test found two significant differences in the perceptions of venue managers and meeting planners on the strength of their communication and resource and information sharing.

For the components of trust and willingness, overall, venue managers were more willing to commit to co-creative and collaborative processes that meeting planners. However, meeting planners were more confident and trusting of the competency and experience of venue managers they worked with than the venue managers were of the meeting planners they worked with, based on the responses.

For the component of understanding, all three categories of respondents perceived themselves to be understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the party they work with.

For the component of transparency and shared resources, venue managers scored higher than meeting planners. However, they each perceived themselves to be more transparent in communicating with the other party to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience than the other was in doing so.

For the component of communication and interaction, again venue managers' perceptions of the efficiency and channels of communication were higher than that of meeting planners.

Finally, for the component of shared resources and objectives, venue managers perceived that the meeting planner did/does not provide him/her with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions as the average responses from venue managers were lower than that of meeting planners. It was, nonetheless, the perception of

the participants that they treated each other as equal partners in sharing information and

resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience (see Table 5.2).

Table 5. 1 Relationship Perspectives

QUESTION	V.CS.M	M.P	OTHER
Is your relationship with _____ co-creative/collaborative?	1.17	1.25	1.00
The success of a meeting is greatly influenced by the relationship between venue managers and meeting planners	6.25	6.50	4.33

Table 5. 2 Co-creation, relationship marketing, and collaboration concept
measurement scale

SCALE	V.CS.M	M.P	OTHER
Trust/ Willingness I am willing to commit to a co-creative or collaborative process	6.75	4.00	5.75
I am confident in and trust the competency and experience of the _____ I work with	5.50	6.00	5.67
Understanding/ Respect I am understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the _____ I work with	6.67	6.50	6.67
Transparency/ Shared values I communicate with ___ to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience	6.75	6.00	6.67
The _____ communicates with me to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience	6.08	5.00	5.33
Comprehensive information pertaining to risks and benefits of working together is clearly communicated	5.67	5.25	4.00
Communication/ Interaction Communication between myself and the _____ is efficient	6.08	6.00	5.00
Multiple lines of communication are available for both parties to gather input and ideas	6.42	6.25	6.00

Table 5.2 (continued)

Shared resources and objectives			
The _____ provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.	5.25	6.00	4.67
I provide the _____ with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.	6.42	6.50	6.00
_____ is treated as an equal partner in sharing information and resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience	6.50	6.50	6.33

To help fill the gaps by identifying what attributes of the person they are working with would help make committing to co-creative collaborative as well as relationship marketing processes better, respondents perceived that *competence of oneself, responsiveness to unexpected problems and communication skill* were the extremely important attributes required based on overall average responses respectively, as well as, *ability to connect meeting planner with local convention and visitor's bureau, knowledge of facilities for off-site events and ability to handle stressful situation,* which was also suggested. The least important attributes were *experience, reputation, and individual personality* respectively. From the perspective of venue managers, the attributes they believed were extremely important for meeting planners to have that would make the process successful were *communication skills,* their own competency *and the meeting planner's responsiveness to unexpected problems* respectively. Meeting planners, on the other hand, perceived that the venue manager's *responsiveness to unexpected problems, accessibility, and competence in themselves*, were the extremely important attributes.

Finally, based on the means of the responses to each attribute, the overall perception of the three most important facility attributes was *safety and security, friendliness of staff* and *quality of catering services.* From the perception of venue

53

managers, however, the three most important facility attributes were *safety and security,*
friendliness of staff and *quality of meeting space* respectively. The "other" respondents
also perceived *safety and security* as an extremely important attribute. The other
attributes were *quality of catering services* and *availability of on-site catering services.*

Discussion and Conclusion

This research study explored the applicability of the co-creation, relationship
marketing and collaboration theories in the meeting industry. Specifically, the study
applied the combined components of these theories to explore the perceptions of venue
managers and meeting planners on the condition of their working relationships and the
attributes needed to host successful relationships.

Overall, the study examined components and attributes necessary to achieving
favorable outcomes when two or more parties are involved in a co-creative relationship,
be it relationship marketing or collaborative. It also examined attributes that have been
listed in previous literature as important to hosting successful events. From the analysis
of the responses from the survey, job functions described by both venue managers and
meeting planners did not change from what has already been recorded in literature. This
observation indicates that managers and planners have a deep understanding of what their
responsibilities are. It was also observed that venue managers were more willing to
commit to collaborative processes even though their main role and function are to
provide the meeting planners with whatever they need to host their meetings. Although
there are respect and understanding, which are very important, the components of
transparency, shared resources, communication, and trust are low on the part of meeting
planners from the perspective of venue managers. A common attribute that all

54

stakeholders believe to be extremely important to building and maintaining relationships to host successful meetings was self-competence and responsiveness. The rankings indicate that these attributes are either lacking or need improvement. With Safety and Security at the top of the list as an extremely important facility attribute, it was interesting to note the responses to the question "comprehensive information pertaining to the risks and benefits of working together is clearly communicated" were low, especially from the perspective of the "other" category, who are essentially venue managers. From the literature, some of the facility-related characteristics that were identified as criteria used by planners were size of meeting room, complexity of audio-visual equipment, control of lighting and climate, price (Reneghan & Kay, 1987), quality and response services (Baloglu & Love, 2001), parking and transportation, food service availability in and outside the building, signage within and outside the center and seating throughout the center (Breiter & Milman). However, of the current study, because of the nature of the responses from meeting planners, the researcher was unable to identify which attributes were most important from their perspective, which could mean that they are all significant. Although this was the case, attributes that received a high average of responses however were friendliness of staff, quality of catering services, availability of on-site caterings services promotional appeal, quality of convenience services, quality of support services, suitability of venue to meeting type, location of venue, venue accessibility, suitability of meeting, meeting room rates, timely, readable and accurate billing, availability of technological resources, safety and security and capacity of meeting room respectively. Attributes such as parking, proximity to restaurant and retail

businesses were low on the list. Availability of accommodation was also low, but one responded commented that having a hotel attached to the venue was extremely important.

Implications

The higher of the responses being from venue managers implies their interest in the topic and their willingness to building and maintaining stronger relationships with meeting planners and other stakeholders of the meeting industry.

The study also suggests that communication skills and responsiveness to problems were attributes that were either lacking or needed improvement on the road to producing meetings. The responses on the competence of self-indicates that the success of a meeting relies largely on the ability of stakeholders to perform their duties and deliver on promises.

Based on the responses, venue managers and meeting planners must try harder at making available all relevant information and resources pertaining to the meeting to the other party. As one respondent mentioned, it is the responsibility of the meeting planner to know every detail of the meeting from beginning to end and it is the duty of the venue manager to make sure that the meeting planner has all that he/she needs, as stated by another respondent. For these two statements to be true, all information and resources that will enable the other to deliver must be readily made available.

The study also presents a theoretical model of how stakeholder co-creation activities can drive more successful meeting as effective co-creation ventures enhance the ability of venue managers to promote their individual capabilities and their meetings.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study is sample size. Although the study had a specific target population, it utilized different channels and methods to reach out to potential participants. The low response could be attributed to the fact that the survey instrument (URL) is on the block list of some organizations, as was found out from a potential participant the email was sent to and a "blocked" alert from others. Also, meeting planners are often on the move, therefore many of them may not have the time to respond to the survey. The researcher received several automatic replies informing her that the meeting planner was either out of the office or town for work and was unable to respond to the email at that moment. Due to the small sample size, some statistical analysis which could have provided a wider perspective on the issue being studied were not performed.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The research has introduced a new dimension to understanding the attributes necessary to hosting successful meetings by including the perspectives of convention center venue managers. Before this study was conducted, the researcher discussed the topic with some venue managers and professors and the results of the study indicate that venue managers are indeed interested in finding ways to improve their relationships with meeting planners and the experiences of attendees.

While the study expands existing knowledge on co-creation, relationship marketing and collaboration which are prominent in the marketing and healthcare disciplines, the application of these theories in the meeting industry is scarce. Future studies could extend the population to other stakeholders in the industry and include more questions and attributes to assess their willingness to commit to collaboration and identify

57

which lacking attributes when improved could enhance co-creative processes. Technology collaboration is trending now, but people collaboration needs to trend even more for there to be bigger and better meetings and experiences.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cover letter

<div align="center">

VENUE MANAGERS AND MEETING PLANNERS: A COMBINED
PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS, AND ATTRIBUTES
NECESSARY FOR HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

</div>

Dear Participants,

You are being invited to take part in a survey about the attributes necessary for hosting a successful meeting in the industry today from your perspectives as venue managers or meeting planners. The survey is designed to collect information about how the significance of some attributes have changed over the last two decades and how relationships between venue managers and meeting planners influence the hosting of successful events. Your response is very important as stakeholders in the industry. The results of this study will not only help us better understand the meeting process but also help the meeting industry with stakeholder engagement at meetings and conferences in the future. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 500 people to do so nationally and results of this study will be shared with you upon request.

Your email addresses were obtained from the staff directories on your organization's websites and some of you are being contacted through your Association chapter representatives or local Convention and Visitor's Bureaus.

To participate in this study, you must be 18 years or older. The survey should take roughly 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is optional and all survey responses are confidential - no names will appear or be used in research documents or be used in presentations or publications. There are no known risks to participating in this study. If you have questions about the study, please feel free to ask.   My contact

information is below if you have questions about this survey. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428 or my advisor, Dr. Ying (Tracy) Lu, Department of Retailing and Tourism Management, tracy.lu@uky.edu

To ensure your responses will be included, please complete the survey by March 30, 2018. Please move on to the next page to begin the survey.

Thanks again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Maame Afua Offeibea Adu

Department of Retailing and Tourism Management

College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky

maad225@uky.edu

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Start of Block: Screening
Are you 18yrs or older?
Yes
No

I am a _____
Venue/ Convention Services Manager
Meeting Planner
Other (please specify) _____

End of Block: Screening

Start of Block: Roles
The Following questions will give you an opportunity to tell us more about your role and experience. Please answer openly.

What is your job function?
_____

From your experience as a ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}, what role will you say a person in your position plays in producing a successful meeting?
_____

Is your relationship with ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} co-creative/collaborative?
* Co-creation: a joint process of creating value through interaction and collaboration
* Collaboration: "an interactive process having a shared transformational purpose and characterized by an explicit voluntary membership, joint decision making, agreed upon rules and a temporary structure." (Robert and Bradley, 1991)
Yes
No

If not, what will you describe the relationship as?
_____
End of Block: Roles

Start of Block: Relationship Assessment.

These attributes are meant to assess the strength of your relationship with ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} and your willingness to engage in co-creative and collaborative activities. Please be objective in your responses.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree

The success of a meeting is greatly influenced by the relationship between Venue Managers and Meeting Planners.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

As a ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}, I am willing to commit to a co-creative or collaborative process.
Strongly Disagree
Agree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

As a ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}, I am confident in and trust the competency and experience of the ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} I work with.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

Communication between myself and ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} is efficient.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree

Agree
Strongly Agree

I am understanding, respectful and appreciative of contributions of the ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} I work with.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

I communicate with the ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

The ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} communicates with me to provide and receive input on improving the meeting experience.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

Multiple lines of communications are available for both parties to gather input and ideas.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

Comprehensive information pertaining to the risks and benefits of working together is clearly communicated.
Strongly Disagree

Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

The ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} provides me with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

I provide the ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} with the necessary tools and support to make fully informed decisions.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree

${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} is treated as an equal partner in sharing information and resources needed to achieve a successful meeting experience.
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Somewhat Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Somewhat Agree
Agree
Strongly Agree
End of Block: Relationship Assessment.

Start of Block: Partner and Venue Attributes
This section is designed to collect information on the attributes necessary for hosting a successful meeting. There are two sections; *Partner Attributes: these are to describe the desired attributes of the ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/UnselectedChoices} you work with for hosting a meeting. *Destination and Venue Attributes: These are to describe the attributes necessary for a facility to have to successfully host a meeting.*

Please indicate your level of agreement with the importance of each item to producing a successful meeting. Responses range from 1= not at all important to 7=extremely important.

As a _____ How will you rate the importance of the following partner attributes to the hosting of successful meetings?

	Not at all Important	Not Important	Slightly Unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Extremely Important
Competence of self							
Competence of partner							
Reputation							
communication skills							
Experience							
Mutual Respect							
Consistency							
Individual Personality							
Responsiveness to unexpected problems							
Working relationship							
Flexibility							
Accessible							

Any additional comments or attributes?

_____

As a ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry}, How will you rate the importance of the following Destination and Venue attributes to the hosting of successful meetings?

	Not at all Important	Not Important	Slightly Unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Extremely Important
Number of							

meeting rooms						
Capacity of meeting rooms						
Quality of meeting space						
Parking						
Safety and Security						
Availability of technological resources						
Timely, readable and accurate billing						
Meeting room rates						
Suitability of meeting						
Appeal of destination						
Venue accessibility						
Location of venue						
Suitability of venue to meeting type						
Quality of support services						
Quality of convenience services						
Re-booking simplicity						
Service development and innovation						
Business						

benefits							
Cost/ Value of hosting meeting							
Image/ Reputation							
Promotional appeal							
Proximity to restaurant/retail businesses							
Availability of on-site catering services							
Quality of catering services							
Availability of accommodation							
Friendliness of Staff							

Any additional comments or attributes?

_____

End of Block: Partner and Venue Attributes

Start of Block: Demographics

The following are meant to gather demographic information relevant to the study.

Gender
Male
Female
Age
18-25
26-35
36-45
46-55
56-65
65+
What is your highest level of education?
High school graduate/ secondary school or less

Some college but no degree
Diploma/ Associates degree
Bachelor's degree
Graduate/ Postgraduate degree or above
Other (please specify) _____

How many years have you worked in the meetings industry?
_____

How many years have you been employed in your current position?
_____

Do you hold any industry certification? (CMP, CMM, CSEP, CVP etc.)
Yes (please specify) _____
No

Which of the following best describes the level of your position in your organization?
Upper Management
Middle Management
Junior Management
Trained Professional
Private/ Independent
Other (please specify) _____
None

What is the average number of meetings you have hosted over the last year?
_____

What is the average number of meetings you have planned over the past year?
_____

What is the average meeting size over the last year?
<50
50-100
101-500
501-1000
1001-5000
5001-10,000
10,000+
End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Block 5
Thank   you   for   taking   time   to   complete   this   survey.
Your feedback is important to inform and enhance our understanding of the perspectives of ${Q2/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoicesTextEntry} in hosting a successful meeting.

Appendix C: Reminder Email

From: maad225@uky.edu

To:

Subject: REMINDER: Survey of an investigation of the important attributes for hosting successful Meetings from the combined perspectives of Venue Managers and Meeting Planners

Dear Participant,

You were recently invited to participate in this survey. If you have already completed the questionnaire, please accept our gratitude and ignore this e-mail as no further involvement is required. If you have not, I kindly ask that you take a few minutes to fill out the survey for this research.

You are being invited to take part in a survey about the attributes necessary for hosting a successful meeting in the industry today from your perspectives as venue managers or meeting planners. The survey is designed to collect information about how the significance of some attributes have changed over the last two decades and how relationships between venue managers and meeting planners influence the hosting of successful events. Your response is very important as stakeholders in the industry. The results of this study will not only help us better understand the meeting process but also help the meeting industry with stakeholder engagement at meetings and conferences in the future. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 500 people to do so nationally and results of this study will be shared with you upon request.

To participate in this study, you must be 18 years or older. The survey should take roughly 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is optional and all survey responses are confidential - no names will appear or be used in research documents or be used in presentations or publications. There are no known risks to participating in this study. If you have questions about the study, please feel free to ask.   My contact information is below if you have questions about this survey. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the

University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428 or my advisor, Dr. Ying (Tracy) Lu, Department of Retailing and Tourism Management, tracy.lu@uky.edu

To ensure your responses will be included, please complete the survey by March 30, 2018. Please click on the web link below to begin the survey.

Thanks again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Maame Afua Offeibea Adu

Department of Retailing and Tourism Management

College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky

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Vita

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