

A Theoretical Framework of Organization Senior Management's Choice of Convention Venue

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Abstract—Organizations are important in meeting industry as they decide the venue and pay for the event. Senior managements play very important roles in organizations decision making. As such, understanding the organization senior management's choice of convention venue based on the current marketing trend is very important especially for the venue suppliers and other stakeholders in convention industry. This theoretical framework of organization senior management's choice of convention venue focuses on the prior knowledge construct, belief constructs (behavioral belief, normative belief, destination belief and brand belief) and attitude constructs (behavioral attitude, subjective norm, destination image and brand image). The theoretical framework for this conceptual paper underpinned the theory of reasoned action.

Keywords—Brand Image, Choice, Convention Industry, Destination Image, Marketing Trend, Organization Senior Management, Theory of Reasoned Action

I. INTRODUCTION

CONVENTION industry grows at a rapid rate and a main economic sector to various nations (Robson, 2009; Martha, 2006). The convention industry comprises of a variety of events ranging from a small meeting to major events like conventions and trade shows (Crouch, 1998). Convention industry is also very competitive especially in this globalization and information technology advancement era (Severt, 2007).

The stakeholders of the convention industry comprise organizations that hosting convention events, convention planners, convention venue suppliers and convention participants/attendees (Robson, 2009). The participants/attendees of convention events could be either self sponsored or sponsored by their organizations. Associations conventions for example Toastmasters International the participants are self sponsored as compared to corporate convention where the participants are normally sponsored by their respective organizations.

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This theoretical framework shall focus on the aspect of convention venue choice of one of the most important stakeholders in the convention industry which is the organization as organizations are the decision makers, the hosts and pay masters for the convention events. The factors in this theoretical framework are related to the influence of antecedents and in specific the influence of prior knowledge, behavioral belief, behavioral attitude, normative belief, subjective norm, destination belief, destination image, brand belief and brand image on the convention venue choice. This theoretical framework shall emphasize on the organization senior management as they play major roles and have great responsibility to ensure the success of any convention event and the research void in understanding the organization senior management's choice of convention venue is huge. In making the choice, the organization senior management needs to satisfy many parties that are considered important to them in the choice such as the board of directors, the potential convention event participants, members of organizing committee, event planners as well as the employees. Organization senior managements are also very important to the convention venue providers in their business strategies. The aspect of brand is also to be one of the mains focus in this theoretical framework as branding is very core in the current marketing trend that influence the choice.

What are the important marketing and psychological constructs important in understanding the organization senior management choice of convention venue? In order to answer this question, this theoretical framework focus on the development of a model based on a robust human behavior theory of reasoned action to determine whether the important constructs in the psychology and marketing disciplines namely the prior knowledge, behavioral belief, normative belief, destination belief, brand belief, behavioral attitude, subjective norm, destination image and brand image influence the senior management choice of convention venue. The proposed model is important as despite many studies have been carried out in the area of convention industry the number of research studies that are theory driven and the models developed to date are still limited.

Looking into the aspect of research development, despite the importance of the convention industry in tourism, there are still many areas within this important economic sector that have yet to be examined in depth which according to Severt (2007) the development of research in convention industry is

still low as compared to the significant growth of this convention industry.

Organizations are one of the major stakeholders and are very important in the convention industry as many of the convention attendees are sponsored by organizations and organizations also host and pay for many convention and corporate events that range from board of directors meetings to large scale of events like convention and exposition (Myong, 2005). Senior managements play a very important role and have a great influence on the organizations in convention venue choice as they are answerable to the top management and board of directors and their decisions need also to satisfy the employees and participants. Hence, the more information that the venue centres suppliers know about the senior managements' prior knowledge, attitude and behavior in convention venue choice would give them the edge of being chosen. It is surprising to note that still little empirical studies that examine in detail the convention venue choice from the perspective of senior management of organizations. This is supported by (Crouch, 2003, Martha, 2006) when they mentioned that although the convention industry is very important in the tourism; there are still many aspects related to convention venues are not thoroughly explored despite several researchers have attempted to examine the convention venue selection criteria.

Notwithstanding many studies in the past have shed some light on the convention venue choice, the research void in the convention venues selection is still huge as the trend of past studies show majority of the studies were carried out in the western world where some of the major finding may not be applicable to other parts of the globe due to the differences in terms of senior managements' knowledge, belief, attitude, behavior, preference, cultures, environment, location and destination factors such as public transport system, traveling regulation, and support from the government and tourism agencies. Hence, many important elements and information that are related to convention venue choice that are fruitful to the stakeholders may have yet to be completely revealed, addressed and put forward the recommendations that benefit the main stakeholders in particular and other key players in convention industry in general.

Literature study reveals that brand is very important especially in a very competitive business environment as the brand name and logo are among the most tangible attribute of convention venue provider that could easily grab the attention and recall by the decision makers. Convention venue suppliers are operating in a very competitive business environment and as such branding is very important for positioning which according to Temporal (2002) branding is a core in strategic marketing for positioning. It is also observed that despite the important of branding, surprisingly to note that not many studies in convention industry that focused on branding. Without establishing a strong brand venue supplier would face difficulties to get the edge in positioning. As such there is an urgent need that studies in convention venue to look into the aspect of branding. The aspect of branding is very important to look into as strategic branding could complement the areas that a convention venue facing the constraint likes the demand for larger exhibition area.

Although past studies have identified and highlighted some of the factors that are important in convention venue selection, the important factors identified in the past studies especially relating to destination image may not be the same today due to some recent major global issues such as major storm in the United States, tsunami and nuclear plant crisis in Japan, flooding in Thailand, volcanic ash at Europe and economic issues that may have changed the destination belief and image in the evoked set of senior management of organizations' mind which warrant for researchers to revisit the factors important in convention venue selection especially from the theoretical perspective.

Many of the convention attendees in corporate events are sponsored by their organizations. Senior management of organization play important role in choosing the right venues that satisfy the employees, participants, top management and the board of directors. Senior managements also play important role in choosing the right convention venue for their organizations in hosting the corporate events. In making the choice the senior management has to consider various aspects which include the requirement of the board of directors, the employees as well as his reputation and career development. In spite of the important role of the senior management in convention venue choice for their employees convention participation or for their organization to host corporate convention events, very little or no past research studies that investigate the senior management convention venue choice. This research gap need to be addressed as the subjective norm or social pressure like these have been theoretically proven affecting the decision making and posit to apply in this convention industry domain.

Past studies reveal that prior knowledge influence the current decision (Conway, 2001). Regardless of the important of prior knowledge in marketing studies, prior knowledge factor is not very much emphasized in the convention venue choice research studies. Understanding the convention venue choice from the foundation of evoke sets which is the prior knowledge is very important as it relates to the information processing whereby clear understanding in this area is vital in designing the effective marketing strategies. According to the information processing theory model not all the marketing information is successfully reach the long term memory and recall by the customers. The information which is not in the evoked sets of customers is not easily recall and hence, does not be accessible as a prior knowledge to form the belief and influence the current decision. As such it is very important that the study in convention industry to examine the influence of prior knowledge on the convention venue choice.

Understanding the factors related to belief and attitude are also very important as theoretically proven that these factors influence the behavior. Although past studies have investigated these factors, the studies in convention venue choice do not really emphasized on the influence of belief and attitude on convention choice. The lack of research finding in this important constructs need to be addressed for the enrichment of body of knowledge as well as to help important players in convention industry.

The lack of empirical data to understand organization senior management's choice of convention venue may lead to many theoretical and practicality problems. For example, without

clear understanding the senior management prior knowledge, salient belief and attitude are difficult for marketers to develop marketing plan and strategy in convention industry. Lack of model to explain senior management choice of convention venue also cause problem in terms of understanding the significant of each construct and casual interaction between the important constructs involved.

Convention venues developers are spending huge amount of money for the development of convention venue centre. Whether their investment would have an attractive return would depend much on the choice of their customers especially organizations that host and pay for the convention events. Tangible or physical aspects of the venue alone of course cannot ensure a lucrative market share of the venue without the venue provider to seriously looking into other intangible aspects of marketing like branding and understanding the psychological aspects of the customers like prior knowledge, salient belief and attitude.

Despite many studies done, the theory-driven research studies are still lacking in convention venue choice domain. In order to address the above issues and to fill the research gap, this theoretical framework will focus on the core areas which are the convention venue domain, senior management of organization, enrichment the theory of reasoned action and development of model comprising major constructs in particular the prior knowledge construct, behavioral belief Construct, behavioral attitude construct, destination belief construct, destination image construct, brand belief construct and brand image construct.

II. LITERATURE STUDY

The objectives of this literature study are to understand the definition of convention industry, the stakeholders, the existing theoretical framework and research models, the underpinning theories adopted in past studies, the areas of focused in the past studies, the recommendation for future research put forward in the past studies, the methodology adopted in the past studies, the important finding of the past studies and research voids. The information gathered from this literature study will be used as a guiding principle in developing the theoretical framework of organization senior management's choice of convention venue.

Convention refers to various events that people meet with each other. This is in accordance to the definition given by Dotson (1985) mentioning that convention industry comprises of a variety of events ranging from a small meetings to major events like conventions and trade shows (Crouch, 1998). Convention industry as mentioned by Kim, Morrison & Mill (2003) is also very competitive especially in this globalization and information technology advancement era (Severt, 2007). Despite the importance of the convention industry in tourism, there are still many areas within this important economic sector that have yet to be examined in depth which according to Yoo and Weber (2005) the development of research in convention industry is still low as compared to the significant growth of this convention industry (Severt, 2007).

Convention industry has many stakeholders and the main stakeholders are the attendees who participate in the meeting events, the planners who are appointed by the organizations to

run the meeting events, the suppliers who supply the meeting venues for the meeting events and the organizations who host and pay for the events or sponsor the attendees (Robson, 2009). The research void in the areas to determine the requirements of each stakeholder is still huge. Based on the studies by Baloglu & Love (2005), Beaulie & Love (2004) and Jeong-Ja (2004), Severt (2007) reveals the important of organizations in the meeting venue industry as they host and provide the financial support. As mentioned by Myong (2005) based on the earlier statement by Reichbart (2004), organizations are one of the major stakeholders and are very important in the convention industry as many of the convention attendees are sponsored by organizations and organizations also host and pay for many convention and corporate events that range from board of directors meetings to large scale of events like convention and exposition. Despite the important of organizations as they are the hosts, the pay masters and decision makers, the details study in terms of the salient beliefs, attitudes and behavioral important to the senior managements are still lacking. Hence, these warrant for more researches studies in these particular areas.

Literature study reveals that from 1985 to present various academic studies have been carried out in the convention industry domain. Regardless many studies have been carried out there are still many areas in this industry that have yet to be explored. For example, despite the important of branding, only one study on branding in convention industry domain found which is by Lee (2006) on the effect of conference brand knowledge. Although destination is important to attract the potential participants, the numbers of studies that focus on destination especially that are theory driven in tourism industry is still limited and among the theory driven research in tourism industry are by Zhou (2007) on the evaluation of destination tourism and Phetvaroon (2006) on the destination selection after crisis. Site selection process is one of the main area focuses in the convention industries. Literature review, proposed conceptual model and future studies recommendation by Crouch (1998) is among the most significant study in the area of site selection process. Others significant studies in the area of site selection as mentioned by Myong (2005) are by Crouch & Louviere (2003), Getz (2003) and Grant, Y.N.J., & Weaver, P.A., 1996. Despite the important of marketing in convention industry, literature study only reveal one study that emphasized on marketing which is by Severt (2007) on measuring the effectiveness of marketing effort in convention industry. Meeting planners also play important role in convention industry and researchers who have carried out studies involving meeting planners are Severt (2007) and others mentioned by Severt (2007) are Baloglu & Love (2005), Beaulie & Love (2004) and Jeong-Ja, 2004). Convention industry is a global business exposed to risks and crisis and amongst the studies found that emphasized on risks is by Robson (2009) on perception of convention risks and Smith (2008) on the crisis preparedness. On the aspect of customer satisfaction, one study found in the convention venue domain which has been carried out by Thomas (2008) on motivation and satisfaction. Past studies have also carried out on the aspect of services and one of the studies that focus on services as reported by Severt (2007) is by Breiter (2006) on the attendee's need and service priorities. Past studies also

attempted to understand the trends of researches in convention industry and amongst the studies that have been carried out on this are by Kim (2011) on the patterns and trend of research in convention industry over 30 years and the earlier study as reported by Myong (2005) is by Carlsen (1999) on a review of MICE industry evaluation and research in Asia and Australia 1988-1998.

Although many studies have been carried out in convention industry, the numbers of theory driven based research studies and the models in convention domain are still limited and according to Mohammadi (2010), among the earliest research models developed in the meeting venue industry is econometric model (Var, Cesario and Mauser, 1985).

The meta analysis on the development of models related to this study is as follow:

TABLE I
META ANALYSIS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS

Year	Researcher	Description of model
1998	Crouch, G.I., & Ritchie, J.R.B.	General conceptual model of site election process
1998	Oppermann, M. & Chon, K.S.	Participation decision making process model
2003	Crouch, G.I., & Louviere, J.J.	Place marketing of buyer behavior model
2004	Crouch, G.I., & Louviere, J.J.	Modeling the logistic choice using experiment data
2005	Comas, M & Mascardo, G.	An expansion to the site selection process model
2005	Myong, J.L.	Modeling meeting participation
2006	Kim, D.Y.	Modeling information search in convention industry
2008	Hung, K.	Modeling decision making in travel
2011	Lu, Y.	Modeling attendee behavioral in convention

The general conceptual model of the site selection (Crouch, 1998) is found to be the most suitable to be used as a guiding principle in developing model for the convention venue choice. This general conceptual research model integrates the antecedent function, site selection factor and decision making steps. The researcher who has adopted this conceptual model in the study is Comas (2005) in understanding meeting venue site selection process and also the attributes important using qualitative approach. Comas (2005) then enhance the earlier Crouch (1998) model by adding the bidding process step and the organizing committee selection process step.

Theory driven based studies are very significant for the enrichment of the body of knowledge. Underpinning theory is the core in the academy research. Notwithstanding many academic studies that have been carried out in the convention industry, the number of theory driven studies is still low. Theory driven based studies that are related to this theoretical framework are meeting participation model underpinning the theory of reasoned action (Myong, 2005), destination selection after crisis underpinning the theory of planned behavior (Phetvaroon, 2006) and travel decision making underpinning the theory of planned behavior (Hung, 2008).

Based on the literature study the theory that is the most suitable for this theoretical framework is the Theory of

Reasoned Action (TRA). In hospitality and tourism industry, the theory of reasoned action has been adopted in the research on the development of meeting participation model by Myong (2005). Another one as reported by Myong (2005) is in the study to improve the understanding of recreational behavior by Young, R.A., & Kent, A.T. (1985). The development of Meeting Participation Model (Myong, 2005) is based on the earlier Oppermann and Chon (1997) Participation Process Model.

Literature study revealed that the theory of reasoned is still few adopted as an underpinning theory in the past studies in understanding senior management's choice of convention venue although this theory is very relevant as it emphasize a lot on the important constructs in particular the behavioral belief, behavioral attitude, normative belief, subjective norm and behavioral intention constructs.

The theory of reasoned action is developed in accordance to Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) statement that human behaviors are influenced by their attitudes and subjective norm based on the assumption that human behavior is motivation based and rational (Myong, 2005). The constructs involved in this theory are behavioral belief, normative belief, behavioral attitude, subjective norm and behavioral intention. Belief refers to a person's belief that a behavior will lead to a certain consequence. Normative belief refers to the likelihood that others who are important to him such as board of directors, employees, spouse, parent or colleges would approve or disapprove his behavioral. Attitude is referring to the degree individual like or dislikes of an objects. Subjective norm as defined by Chang (1998) is an individual's perception of people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question (Myong, 2005).

This literature study also investigated the past studies in the area of meeting venue attributes important and found that attributes that are related to destination which are beyond the control of convention venue provider such as accessibility and site environment are important. According to Oppermann (1998) based on the meeting planners' perspective, hotel room facilities, service and quality are ranked among the top convention venue attributes important.

Amongst the recommendations for future research studies put forward in the past studies in the convention meeting venue domain are by Yoo & Weber (2005) to look into the impact of economic, social, cultural, marketing tools and the role of web-based application (Severt, 2007) and by Crouch (1998) to look into the aspects of professionalism and globalization.

This literature study also examined the methodologies adopted in the past studies and found that both quantitative and qualitative methods have been adopted although the number of studies that utilized the quantitative method is more than the studies that utilized the qualitative method. Since majority of the past studies were carried out in the western world the sampling that include the population in the Asian region is very limited although convention industry is growing at a rapid rate in the Asian region.

For the development of research scale especially for the destination image and brand image constructs, the factors as highlighted by Crouch (1998) could be used as a guiding principle. For example, accessibility is associated with the cost

of transportation and access, time travelling duration, frequency of connection to site, scheduling convenience of connection, the extent of travel; extra conference facilities refer to entertainment, shopping malls, sightseeing, recreation; site environment refer to the desirability of destination climate, the attractiveness of destination surrounding, the suitability and standard of local infrastructure, the extent in welcoming visitors; accommodation facilities refer to the number of room required, the cost of suitable accommodation, the standard of service, a safe and secure environment, availability of facilities when required; site environment refer to the desirability of destination climate, the attractiveness of destination surrounding and the suitability and standard of local infrastructure; information refers to the experience, reputation and marketing; and meeting facilities refer to the capacity, layout, cost, ambience, service, security and availability.

Literature review reveals the following research gaps:

1. Crouch (1998) has developed a good model to explain the decision making process in convention venue site selection and among the factors highlighted in his model are antecedents and site factors. Although Comas (2005) has carried a study based on this model, the study by Comas (2005) only focus on the process and does not attempt to determine the relationship between the factors.
2. Notwithstanding many studies that have been carried out in convention industry the empirical studies especially that developed good model to help various players in the industry to have a better understanding of convention venue choice are still lacking.
4. The theory of reasoned action has been widely applied in many research domains. However the application of this theory in convention industry is still low. The application of this robust behavioral theory is also low in organization senior management domain despite senior management choice is very important. Although past studies have attempted to enrich this theory by adding more constructs in the framework underpinning this theory, there still many important constructs in marketing as well as psychology disciplines that are not tested underpinning this theory.
5. Past studies in convention industry tend to focus more on participants and do not focus much on organizations despite organizations are also very important in convention industry as they are the decision makers, the pay masters and the hosts of convention events.
6. Past studies mentioned that prior knowledge is important as it influenced the current decision. As compared to past experience which is more relevant to repeat purchase, prior knowledge is a much important construct as it is relevant to both repeat purchase and potential new customers as well as for the measurement of the marketing strategies. Although prior knowledge is important, past studies focus more on past experience construct. Important to note that it is also much more difficult to find the measurement scale of prior knowledge from the past studies as compared to the past experience.
7. Branding is very important in marketing studies and the current marketing trend also show branding is one of the main focused areas especially in strategic marketing. Strong brand

requires excellent roadmap, efforts and resources. Although branding is very important to the country, industry and organization theory driven studies on branding in convention industry in particular that underpinning the theory of reasoned action is still lacking.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The General Conceptual Model of Site Selection Decision Making Process (Crouch, 1998) explains that antecedents and convention venue factors are the main determinant of association convention venue choice. However, very few empirical studies that that have been carried out to test this model especially to understand the interaction between the antecedents and the venue factors on the choice. The researcher who has adopted this general conceptual model in the study is Comas (2005) using the qualitative approach in understanding the meeting planners decision making process. Comas (2005) enhanced the model by adding two more steps which are the bidding step and selection of organizing committee step. Although Comas (2005) has carried out an empirical study based on Crouch (1998) model, the study is only limited to the process and does not focused on the interaction between the factors and choice. A General Conceptual Model of Site Selection Process (Crouch, 1998) is in Figure 1.

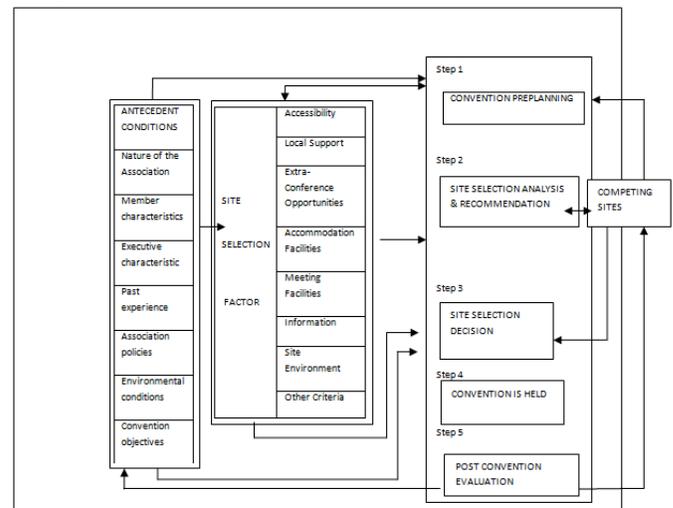


Fig 1: A General Conceptual Model of the Site Selection Process (Crouch1998)

In order to fill the research gap and help stakeholders in convention industry to have a much clearer picture of organization senior management's choice of convention venue, a model to show the relationship between the factors and choice is developed underpinning the theory of reasoned action. This theory is adopted as it emphasizes much on the influence of antecedent on the choice. This theory posits there is interaction between belief constructs (behavioral belief and normative belief) and attitude constructs (behavioral attitude and subjective norm) as well as the relationship between the attitude constructs (behavioral attitude and subjective norm) on the choice. This theory has been tested in various domains and found to be robust in explaining the behavioral choice. The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) is in Figure 2.

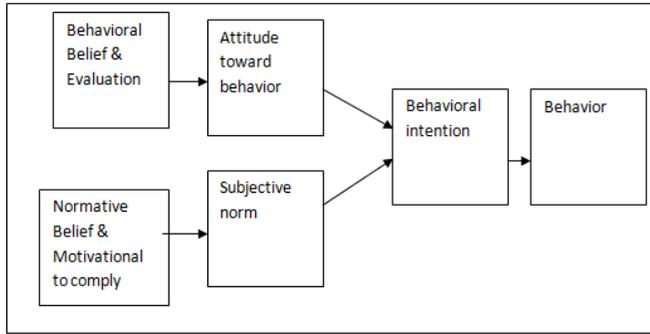


Fig. 2 Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein,1980). After Myong (2005)

There are some studies in tourism industry that apply the theory of reason action and the research study by Myong (2005) in understanding the association members' intention to participate in the convention is found to be the most suitable to be used as guide in developing a model for this framework. In order to truly advanced this theory in explaining the participants choice, Myong (2005) has developed the model underpinning the theory of reasoned action and include additional constructs of past experience, destination belief and destination image while maintain the original theory of reason action constructs of behavioral belief, normative belief, behavioral attitude, subjective norm and behavioral intention. The finding of the Myong (2005) study has shown that the theory of reason action can be a foundation in developing the model in understanding the participants convention participation and the additional constructs which that he has tested which are past experience, destination belief and destination image have truly advanced this theory in explaining the behavioral intention. The Meeting Participation Model by Myong (2005) is in Figure 3.

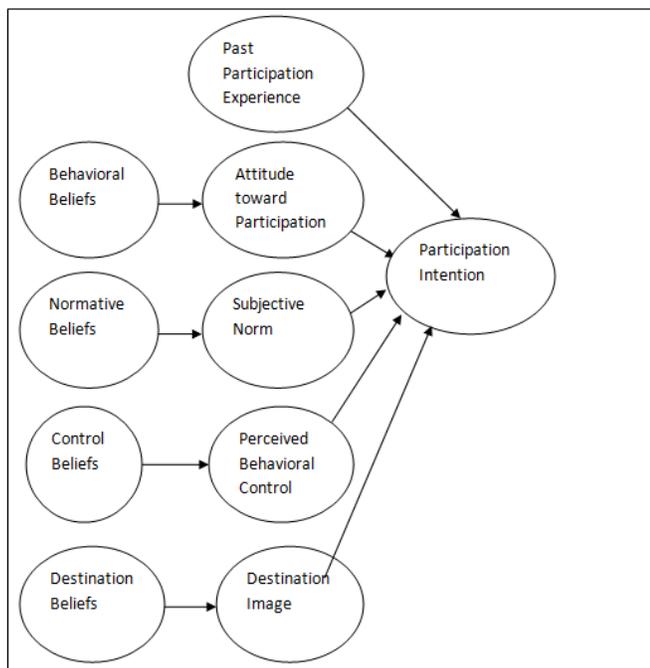


Fig. 3 Meeting Participation Model (Myong, 2005)

Since the theory of reasoned action has been proven can be a foundation in explaining the association members choice, this theory is now applied in organization senior management domain. In developing the model for the organization senior management's choice of convention venue, this theoretical framework includes additional constructs that are important in convention venue choice which are brand belief, brand image and prior knowledge constructs. The proposed organization senior management's choice of convention venue model suggests that belief constructs (behavioral belief, normative belief, destination belief, brand belief) have interactions with the attitude constructs (behavioral attitude, subjective norm, destination image and brand image). This model also suggests prior knowledge and attitude constructs (behavioral attitude, subjective norm, destination image and brand image) positively influence the senior management choice of convention venue. The proposed organization senior management's choice of convention venue model is in Figure 4.

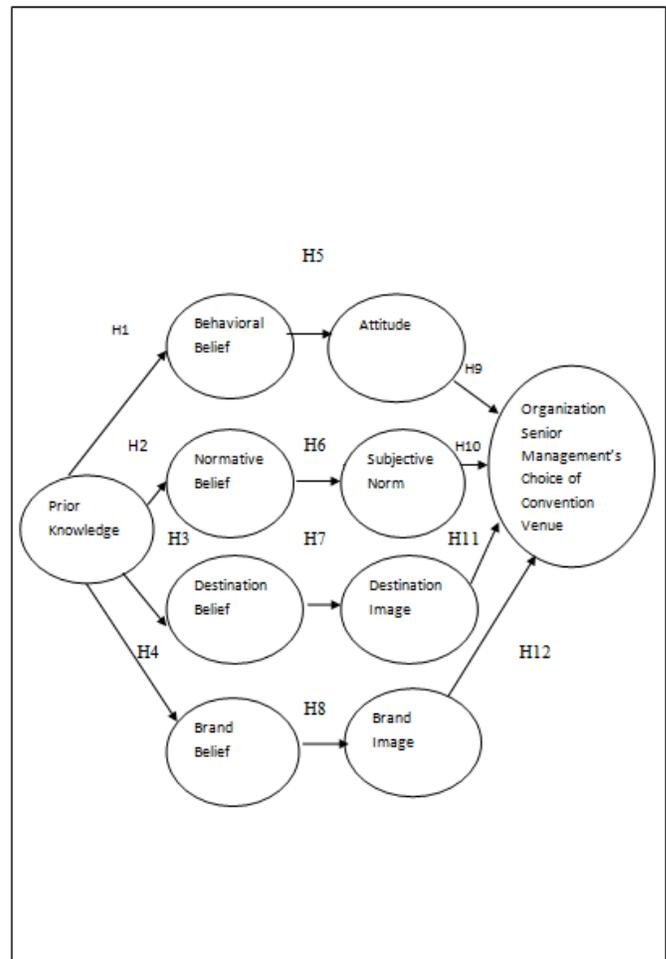


Fig. 4: Proposed Organization Senior Management's Choice of Convention Venue Model

The constructs that are related to branding are included in this model as branding is very important in strategic marketing especially for positioning. Furthermore, strong brand cannot be achieved overnight. Instead it require a long term planning, huge effort and excellent strategies as branding does not only

emphasize on the brand name and logo but involve many associations with tangible and intangible business functions.

The prior knowledge construct is also included in the model based on the finding of the literature study that reveals current decision is influenced by the prior knowledge and it is interesting to determine whether this is also applicable in the context of convention industry. Since prior knowledge is related to the information processing, the prior knowledge factor is very important as individual are normally refer to prior knowledge to facilitate them in making the decision. As compared to past experience which is more relevant to the repeat purchase, prior knowledge is considered to be more important as is relevant to both potential new customers and repeat purchase.

The behavioral belief, behavioral attitude, normative belief, subjective norm, destination belief and destination image constructs which are included in the Myong (2005) in the development of model in understanding association members intention to participate in the convention event are also included in the proposed model as these constructs are relevant and important to be tested in the context of organization senior management's choice of convention venue.

IV. HYPOTHESES

H1: Prior knowledge positively influences behavioral belief toward the convention venue choice.

H2: Prior knowledge positively influences normative belief toward the convention venue choice.

H3: Prior knowledge positively influences destination belief toward the convention venue choice.

H4: Prior knowledge positively influences brand belief toward the convention venue choice.

H5: Behavioral belief positively influences attitude toward the convention venue choice.

H6: Normative belief positively influences subjective norm toward the convention venue choice.

H7: Destination belief positively influences destination image toward the convention venue choice.

H8: Brand belief positively influences brand image toward the convention venue choice.

H9: Behavioral attitude positively influences the convention venue choice.

H10: Subjective norm positively influences the convention venue choice.

H11: Destination image positively influences the convention venue choice.

H12: Brand image positively influences the convention venue choice.

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