

Readiness, Viability, and Brand Equity of Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions of Bacolod City

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Abstract:

The study explored Southeast Asia's growing Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism industry and identified Bacolod City as a key participant. This was attributed to its well-planned infrastructure and skilled workforce. The research aimed to assess Bacolod City's readiness, viability, and brand equity as a hub for the MICE industry. It employed descriptive-comparative and descriptive-correlational research designs. A total of 388 participants representing four event types—competition, seminar, festival, and sports—were selected using quota sampling to ensure diversity. A validated, adapted-modified questionnaire was used, achieving a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.99 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. The instrument captured demographic data and assessed key dimensions of MICE readiness, viability, and brand equity. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, and Spearman's rho. The findings revealed Bacolod's notable strength in accommodation, indicating well-developed infrastructure and visitor services. However, improvements in amenities and accessibility were recommended to enhance the MICE experience. The city demonstrated strong market and management viability, though technical enhancements are needed to meet the expectations of younger, more tech-savvy visitors. Brand equity results highlighted Bacolod's strengths in uniqueness, quality, and image. Tailored marketing strategies were proposed to improve engagement and satisfaction. Overall, Bacolod City's inclusive approach and balanced performance across readiness, viability, and brand equity position it as a competitive MICE destination. Nevertheless, further strategic enhancements in infrastructure, marketing, and brand satisfaction are necessary to sustain and elevate its appeal.

Keywords: *Hospitality and Tourism Management, MICE Industry, Readiness, Viability, Brand Equity, Descriptive Comparative, Descriptive Correlational, Bacolod City*

Introduction:

Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) is widely regarded as one of the most rapidly expanding segments in the global tourism industry (Ramirez, 2021). This market capitalizes on bringing together professionals, enthusiasts, and other stakeholders for various events—ranging from large-scale conventions to intimate corporate incentive trips—that stimulate economic growth, enhance cultural exchange, and showcase local attractions. In Southeast Asia, efforts to strengthen MICE capabilities have become particularly evident, as regional collaborations drive competitiveness and infrastructure development (Ghaffara et al., 2018). Thailand exemplifies such advancement by leveraging both national and international opportunities to fortify its position as a MICE powerhouse (Kerdpitak, 2019).

In the Philippines, the MICE sector is also on an upward trajectory (Ramirez, 2021). Conventions, meetings, and entertainment-related businesses are thriving, fueled by heightened domestic and international attention. Bacolod City, a highly urbanized area located in Negros Occidental, has been recognized as a critical hub for large-scale gatherings in Western Visayas (City et al. Office – Bacolod, 2022). The city's well-planned infrastructure, service-oriented workforce, and cultural allure collectively position it as a promising destination for both national and international conventions. Yet, the mere presence of developed facilities does not guarantee long-term success in the MICE arena. A more comprehensive framework—covering readiness, viability, and brand equity—is indispensable for understanding how Bacolod City can optimize its MICE potential and sustain its competitive edge.

Readiness encompasses the mental and physical preparedness of a locale to adopt a new lifestyle or activity on a large scale (Banjongprasert, 2017). Within tourism, this concept is often evaluated through the "six A's of Tourism"—attractions, amenities, activities, accommodation, accessibility, and accountability (Canson & Caelian, 2022). Such elements collectively influence how visitors perceive and experience a destination, thereby shaping its overall desirability. Beyond readiness, viability delves into whether the city's market environment, technical infrastructure, and management practices can facilitate the sustainable development of the MICE sector (Christia Borbon, 2016). Parallel to these considerations, brand equity in tourism underscores how a destination's name, reputation, and distinguishing features translate into perceived value and loyalty among visitors (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Ebrahim, 2020). Key components—such as brand awareness, uniqueness, value, quality, image, reputation,

satisfaction, and loyalty—determine whether a destination can attract return visitors and positive word-of-mouth endorsements (Haudi et al., 2022).

Despite notable advancements, a distinct research gap persists. While studies have addressed each dimension—readiness, viability, and brand equity—separately, there has been little effort to integrate these constructs into a single inquiry for Bacolod City's MICE environment. This gap limits policymakers, tourism officials, and industry stakeholders from fully harnessing the city's potential. Addressing this shortfall, the current study aims to provide a more holistic view of Bacolod City's prospects as a premier MICE hub by exploring the interplay among readiness, viability, and brand equity dimensions.

Guided by the need for a unified perspective, this study seeks to determine the level of Bacolod City's readiness, viability, and brand equity as perceived by tourists attending events during the Masskara Festival and other gatherings. Specifically, it aims to: (1) examine how Bacolod City fares in terms of attractions, amenities, activities, accommodation, accessibility, and accountability; (2) assess its market, technical, and management viability; and (3) evaluate its brand equity components—brand awareness, uniqueness, value, quality, image, reputation, satisfaction, and loyalty. Further, the study investigates whether these variables significantly differ when respondents are grouped by sex, age, civil status, educational attainment, type of event, and length of stay. Finally, it explores the relationships among readiness, viability, and brand equity, shedding light on how these dimensions collectively shape Bacolod City's competitiveness in the MICE sector. By providing this integrated assessment, the research offers actionable insights that can guide infrastructure development, marketing strategies, and policy interventions aimed at maximizing the city's capacity for hosting local, national, and international events.

The results of this investigation will be beneficial to a wide range of stakeholders. Local government units (LGUs), the Department of Tourism, city planners, and other offices can employ this evidence-based appraisal to refine urban development and tourism-related policies. The hospitality sector and event organizers can utilize the findings to enhance services, infrastructure, and branding strategies, making Bacolod City a more compelling choice for large-scale events. Ultimately, strengthening Bacolod's MICE potential could stimulate economic growth, create employment, and sustain cultural and environmental conservation efforts, ensuring long-term benefits for the local community.

Review of Related Literature

MICE tourism has garnered increasing attention in recent scholarship due to its multidimensional contributions to national economies. Ramirez (2021) underscores that MICE is among the tourism sectors experiencing rapid expansion, generating diverse offerings such as meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibits. In Southeast Asia, the development of MICE is supported by strong regional collaborations, with Thailand demonstrating particularly notable progress through strategic promotion on both national and international levels (Kerdpitak, 2019). The Philippines, too, has registered steady growth in its convention, meeting, and entertainment industries, emphasizing the capacity of localities like Bacolod City to host large-scale events (Ramirez, 2021).

The core strength of MICE lies in its ability to bring people together for shared objectives and experiences (Hinlayagan et al., 2022). This distinct feature positions host cities to develop robust networking platforms, improve infrastructure, and stimulate economic activity. Bacolod City, specifically, has been recognized as a critical hub for conventions in Western Visayas, sharing this status with Iloilo City (City et al. Office – Bacolod, 2022). The city's potential for MICE is bolstered by its established infrastructure, skilled workforce, and status as the Service Center of Negros Occidental. However, the mere presence of physical assets does not guarantee effective MICE hosting; it is necessary to examine readiness, viability, and brand equity in a cohesive framework.

Readiness entails the capacity of a city or organization to adopt and sustain new ventures, encompassing both tangible and intangible resources (Banjongprasert, 2017). Within the tourism sector, the "six A's of Tourism"—Attraction, Amenities, Activities, Accommodation, Accessibility, and Accountability—provide a structured way to measure readiness (Canson & Caelian, 2022). These components collectively influence tourists' decisions, shaping how they perceive convenience, safety, and overall experience. While factors such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, and infrastructure are recognized as critical enablers of a destination's readiness (Phanthanousy & Sribenjachot, 2020), the role of effective governance and financial support further determines the extent to which a location can successfully host MICE events.

Viability refers to the potential for long-term success within a given market. Thompson's Dimensions of Business Viability identify several facets crucial to assessing sustainability, including market viability, technical viability, and management viability. Market viability determines whether a sufficient demand exists for products and services, and whether the competition can be effectively navigated (Christia Borbon, 2016). Technical viability involves evaluating infrastructure, resources, and innovative capacities that enable successful project implementation. Management

viability measures organizational structures, strategic leadership, and risk-management processes. When applied to MICE events, these dimensions help forecast the sustainability of such ventures within specific contexts, including Bacolod City's local business environment.

Brand equity is another vital element influencing tourism destinations (Haudi et al., 2022). Initially conceptualized as both a differentiator and a quality indicator (Shariq, 2018), it has gained traction in tourism marketing for its ability to shape visitor perceptions and decision-making (Stojanovic et al., 2018). Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) underscores that strong brand equity arises from aligning brand identity with consumer emotions and experiences (Cervova & Vavrova, 2021). In the tourism domain, brand equity constructs include brand awareness, uniqueness, perceived value, perceived quality, image, reputation, satisfaction, and loyalty (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010). These dimensions collectively determine how travelers perceive a destination, influencing visit intentions, repeat patronage, and word-of-mouth referrals (Ebrahim, 2020). For emerging MICE destinations like Bacolod City, establishing a favorable brand identity is not merely an exercise in promotion but a strategic imperative for long-term growth (Tran et al., 2019).

In summary, existing literature points to the interconnected nature of destination readiness, viability, and brand equity in driving a thriving MICE sector. Although Bacolod City exhibits strong potential, a systematic evaluation that integrates these three domains remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining Bacolod City's MICE preparedness, its capacity to sustain large-scale events, and its brand positioning, thereby offering a holistic overview crucial for strategic development and policy-making.

Methodology

This study was designed to evaluate Bacolod City's readiness, viability, and brand equity as a hub for the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry. To achieve a comprehensive analysis, the researcher employed a combination of descriptive, comparative, and correlational research designs, each carefully selected to suit the study's objectives and the nature of the data.

The descriptive design was the foundation of the study, chosen for its ability to provide a clear and detailed account of Bacolod City's MICE industry without manipulating any variables. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the characteristics of Bacolod's offerings from the perspective of the participants, thus offering valuable insights into the region's capabilities as a MICE destination. Additionally, a comparative design was employed to examine and compare various demographic groups' assessments of Bacolod City's readiness, viability, and brand equity. This was particularly relevant, as the study sought to measure how different demographic groups, including tourists attending various types of MICE events, viewed Bacolod's performance in these areas (Bostley, 2019).

A third design, the correlational design, was utilized to explore the natural relationships between key variables such as readiness, viability, and brand equity. By employing this design, the researcher could investigate whether variations in one area were related to variations in another, thus gaining deeper insights into the interconnectedness of Bacolod's MICE attributes (Sousa et al., 2007). This holistic approach provided a well-rounded understanding of Bacolod's potential in the MICE industry.

The study's respondents were carefully selected to ensure that the findings would be representative of Bacolod's diverse visitor demographics. Using the Z-score method, the researcher determined a sample size of 388 participants, aiming for a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. The sample was further divided into four MICE event types: competition, seminar, festival, and sports, with 97 respondents from each event type. This division ensured that each category was well-represented. Quota sampling was used, allowing the researcher to gather a diverse range of perspectives from both domestic and international tourists present in Bacolod during the survey period.

The instrument used for data collection was an adapted and modified survey questionnaire, divided into four distinct sections. Part I gathered basic demographic information, such as age, civil status, educational attainment, event type, and length of stay. Part II focused on Bacolod's readiness for MICE, assessing various factors such as attractions, amenities, activities, accommodations, accessibility, and accountability. Part III explored Bacolod's viability for MICE, evaluating market, technical, and management viability. Finally, Part IV measured Bacolod's brand equity, covering aspects like brand awareness, brand uniqueness, brand value, brand quality, brand image, brand reputation, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty. Each of these sections was meticulously designed to ensure comprehensive coverage of Bacolod's MICE strengths and areas for improvement.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher employed the Content Validity Ratio (CVR), which involved the evaluation of 15 expert validators. These validators rated each item of the instrument as "essential," "useful but not essential," or "not essential." The CVR was calculated for each item, and the Content Validity Index (CVI) was determined for each section and the instrument as a whole. Items with a CVR above the threshold were retained,

resulting in a final CVI of 0.99, indicating a high degree of validity. As a result of this assessment, 79 items were retained in the instrument, while 18 items were removed.

The reliability of the instrument was tested through a pilot study with 30 participants who were MICE tourists in Bacolod City. This pilot test was designed to assess the internal consistency of the items, and the data were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability coefficient. With a resulting Cronbach's alpha value of 0.90, the instrument was deemed highly reliable, ensuring that the survey items were consistent and dependable in measuring the intended constructs.

Data collection took place through a combination of face-to-face and online surveys. To ensure maximum participation and capture a wide range of perspectives, the researcher took a dual approach: engaging with respondents personally in various public areas such as cafes, hotel lobbies, conference venues, and sports event locations across Bacolod City, while also providing an online platform for those unable to participate in person. This approach allowed for flexibility in participation while also facilitating clearer communication between the research team and respondents. The researcher's team ensured that the purpose of the study was clearly communicated to the participants, building trust and encouraging thorough responses.

After the data were collected, the research team proceeded to analyze the responses. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were employed to interpret the results related to Bacolod City's readiness, viability, and brand equity. The data were categorized into predetermined ranges to allow for meaningful interpretation, with verbal descriptions that conveyed the extent to which Bacolod met the expectations of MICE participants. For further analysis, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare independent groups with non-normally distributed data, while Spearman's rho was utilized to assess correlations between ranked variables. These statistical techniques ensured that the analysis was both rigorous and appropriate for the nature of the data.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent from all participants. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and they were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, the researcher implemented secure data storage measures and anonymized the data. Additionally, participants' anonymity was ensured by removing identifiable information from the responses. Ethical standards were also upheld in terms of fairness and justice, with participants selected based on unbiased criteria to ensure a diverse and representative sample.

The study was designed with an eye toward ensuring data integrity and accuracy, using validated tools and methodologies to collect and analyze the data. The researcher ensured that all findings, including those that were negative or inconclusive, were reported honestly and thoroughly. The study was also conducted with a commitment to cultural sensitivity, ensuring that the survey instruments were appropriate and respectful of the diverse backgrounds of the participants. The study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), further affirming its adherence to ethical guidelines and participant protection.

Results

Across all 388 respondents, Bacolod City's readiness for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) scored uniformly high. Accommodation led with a mean of 4.96 (SD = 0.726), followed by accountability at 4.93 (SD = 0.739), attractions at 4.90 (SD = 0.752), activities at 4.89 (SD = 0.750), accessibility at 4.86 (SD = 0.731), and amenities at 4.84 (SD = 0.721). The overall readiness index was 4.90 (SD = 0.670).

When disaggregated by sex, female respondents ($n = 260$) reported an overall readiness of 4.94 (SD = 0.629), with highest means for accommodation (5.02, SD = 0.705) and accountability (4.96, SD = 0.704). Male respondents ($n = 127$) gave overall readiness of 4.81 (SD = 0.742), with accountability (4.88, SD = 0.806) and accommodation (4.85, SD = 0.758) highest. Both genders rated amenities lowest (women 4.88, SD = 0.670; men 4.76, SD = 0.811). Statistical tests confirm significant sex differences in activities ($p = .027$), accommodation ($p = .010$), and overall readiness ($p = .027$), while attraction ($p = .157$), amenities ($p = .089$), accessibility ($p = .063$), and accountability ($p = .398$) showed no significant difference.

Age-based comparisons showed younger participants ($n = 281$) with overall readiness of 4.88 (SD = 0.703), rating accessibility lowest (4.83, SD = 0.762), whereas older respondents ($n = 107$) averaged 4.94 (SD = 0.575) and rated attractions highest (5.01, SD = 0.606). No significant age differences emerged across any readiness dimension (all $p > .12$).

Civil status subdividing revealed singles ($n = 354$) rated readiness 4.89 ($SD = 0.679$) with accommodation 4.96 ($SD = 0.732$), while married respondents ($n = 31$) gave 4.99 ($SD = 0.574$) overall, peaking at accountability (5.14, $SD = 0.649$). Educational attainment correlated positively: college graduates ($n = 77$) rated overall readiness 5.02 ($SD = 0.514$); postgraduates ($n = 14$), 4.78 ($SD = 0.688$); senior high graduates ($n = 16$), 4.88 ($SD = 0.496$); college-level attendees ($n = 278$), 4.87 ($SD = 0.716$); and the single junior high respondent, 4.55 ($SD = 0.679$).

By event type, sports attendees ($n = 97$) gave the highest readiness at 5.03 ($SD = 0.508$), driven by amenities (5.17, $SD = 0.547$). Festival participants ($n = 97$) rated readiness lowest at 4.76 ($SD = 0.760$), especially for amenities (4.65, $SD = 0.797$). Competitions and seminars both hovered near 4.96 ($SD \approx 0.72$).

Length-of-stay analysis showed those staying 2–3 days ($n = 147$) rated readiness 4.94 ($SD = 0.696$), whereas one-day visitors ($n = 163$) rated 4.85 ($SD = 0.658$); stays of 4–5 days ($n = 57$) and one week or more ($n = 20$) both exceeded 4.90.

Viability measures—market, technical, and management—were equally robust. Market viability averaged 5.01 ($SD = 0.703$), technical 5.00 ($SD = 0.681$), and management 4.99 ($SD = 0.669$), for overall viability 5.00 ($SD = 0.638$). Females ($n = 260$) rated overall viability 5.05 ($SD = 0.587$) vs. males ($n = 127$) at 4.90 ($SD = 0.721$). Significant sex differences appeared in market ($p = .008$), technical ($p = .007$), and overall viability ($p = .015$), while management viability did not differ ($p = .263$). No significant age-based viability differences were found (all $p > .40$), nor substantial shifts by civil status or education.

In brand equity, Bacolod's uniqueness scored 5.16 ($SD = 0.725$), followed by quality 5.09 ($SD = 0.660$), value 5.06 ($SD = 0.704$), image 5.04 ($SD = 0.682$), reputation 5.04 ($SD = 0.732$), loyalty 5.05 ($SD = 0.713$), awareness 5.02 ($SD = 0.694$), and satisfaction 5.00 ($SD = 0.775$), for an overall equity of 5.06 ($SD = 0.633$). Women ($n = 260$) rated overall equity 5.12 ($SD = 0.590$) vs. men ($n = 127$) at 4.94 ($SD = 0.699$). Significant sex differences appeared in uniqueness ($p = .035$), value ($p = .005$), quality ($p = .007$), image ($p = .015$), reputation ($p = .045$), satisfaction ($p = .005$), loyalty ($p = .030$), and overall equity ($p = .004$); awareness did not differ by sex ($p = .120$). No age-based differences in any equity dimension were detected (all $p > .37$).

Finally, Spearman correlations show strong, positive associations between readiness and viability ($p = 0.744$, $p < .001$), viability and brand equity ($p = 0.806$, $p < .001$), and readiness and brand equity ($p = 0.667$, $p < .001$), indicating these constructs move in tandem.

Discussion

Bacolod City's MICE landscape emerges from the data as a study in operational duality: rock-solid foundations interwoven with uneven service layers. On one hand, delegates uniformly praise the city's Accommodation (M 4.96, SD 0.73) and Accountability (M 4.93, SD 0.74), signaling that hotel capacity, staff professionalism, and program execution consistently meet high expectations. This consistency across gender (women's readiness M 4.94 vs. men's 4.81) and age groups (younger M 4.88 vs. older 4.94) underlines a core competency: no matter who arrives, Bacolod reliably delivers comfortable lodging and well-orchestrated events.

Yet, Amenities—transport links, on-site support services, and leisure facilities—scored a comparatively lower 4.84 (SD 0.72). Although still within the "High" band, this gap reveals that delegates encounter moments of friction outside the plenary halls: wayfinding may be unclear, ancillary service points sparsely equipped, and social spaces underutilized. In practical terms, delegates feel well-cared for during sessions but less immersed when they pause, network, or recharge—a nuance that dampens overall readiness (Carr et al., 2014).

Demographic subtleties sharpen this contrast. Women's higher overall ratings of readiness (M 4.94) and viability (M 5.05) suggest that safety, cleanliness, and service warmth rank especially highly for them, reinforcing Bacolod's reputation for hospitality. Men's stronger confidence in Management Viability (women M 5.03 vs. men 4.92) points to a preference for technical reliability—audio-visual precision, staging logistics, and data-driven planning. That age yields no significant differences implies that these strengths and weak points resonate equally across generations, granting Bacolod a broad demographic reach (Sonderegger et al., 2016).

Breaking the numbers down by event type underscores where the city's operational muscle flexes or wavers. Sports events, which rely on regimented crowd controls and high-volume support, scored highest on both readiness (M 5.03, SD 0.51) and amenities (M 5.17, SD 0.55). By contrast, festivals—with their more fluid layouts and decentralized vendor networks—saw readiness dip to M 4.76 (SD 0.76) and amenities to M 4.65 (SD 0.80). These divergences suggest that Bacolod's logistical frameworks excel in environments demanding strict choreography but require adaptation for more spontaneous, open-air experiences.

Crucially, the high correlations among core constructs—Readiness ↔ Viability ($p = 0.744$), Viability ↔ Brand Equity ($p = 0.806$), Readiness ↔ Brand Equity ($p = 0.667$)—confirm a virtuous cycle. Each infrastructure upgrade or service refinement not only boosts the city's immediate attractiveness to planners but also amplifies its long-term reputation. When Bacolod nails an event, word spreads; market confidence solidifies, and the brand promise becomes self-fulfilling (Almeyda & George, 2020).

Educational attainment further nuances these perceptions. College graduates ($M = 5.02$) and postgraduates ($M = 4.78$) rate readiness more favorably than senior high ($M = 4.88$) and junior respondents ($M = 4.55$), reflecting both higher expectations and a keener appreciation for technical sophistication (Wahyudin et al., 2019). Such segmentation suggests that Bacolod can tailor communications—promoting its cutting-edge A/V systems and data-driven planning tools to professional audiences, while highlighting immersive cultural tours and culinary experiences to less technical cohorts.

Finally, the gap between Brand Uniqueness ($M = 5.16$, $SD = 0.73$) and Brand Satisfaction ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 0.78$) highlights an experiential disconnect. Delegates arrive excited by Bacolod's promise of one-of-a-kind encounters—heritage festivals, waterfront venues, warm local hospitality—but some elements of the on-site execution fall just short of that promise. In other words, Bacolod has mastered anticipation but must sharpen the delivery of those distinguishing moments to convert brand recognition into unwavering loyalty (San Martín et al., 2019).

In summary, Bacolod City's MICE ecosystem is anchored by exemplary lodging and management, buoyed by strong market viability and a distinct brand identity. Yet the uneven layering of amenities and the subtle experiential gaps exposed by demographic and event-type analyses reveal precisely where the city must focus. By refining its service surround—transport connectivity, support facilities, and cultural integration—Bacolod can transform its already robust platform into a seamlessly satisfying, world-class destination.

Analysis

The exceptionally high readiness scores—particularly in Accommodation ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 0.726$) and Accountability ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.739$)—demonstrate that Bacolod City's strategic investments in lodging infrastructure and professional event management have yielded a solid operational foundation (Rajesh, 2013; Carr et al., 2014). The comparatively lower Amenities rating ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 0.721$) highlights a tangible opportunity: targeted upgrades to transportation networks, venue-adjacent leisure facilities, and public-space maintenance can elevate both delegate convenience and overall satisfaction (Carr et al., 2014).

Demographic breakdowns reveal further nuance. Female respondents consistently rated both Readiness ($M = 4.94$ vs. men's $M = 4.81$) and Viability ($M = 5.05$ vs. men's $M = 4.90$) significantly higher ($p < .05$), suggesting that women may be more sensitive to—or more trusting of—the city's MICE infrastructure and market prospects (Greeshma, 2019; Ramirez & Mibato, 2020). By contrast, men's slightly greater confidence in Management Viability ($M = 4.92$) points to differing priorities in logistical assurance. Age showed no statistically significant differences in any dimension (all $p > .12$), indicating that Bacolod's MICE strengths resonate uniformly across generations—a valuable insight for broad-reach marketing (Sonderegger et al., 2016).

Event-type segmentation underscores where Bacolod excels and where it lags. Sports delegates gave the highest Readiness ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 0.508$) and Amenities ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 0.547$), reflecting the city's success in hosting physically intensive gatherings with robust on-site support (Walker et al., 2020). Festival attendees, however, rated Amenities lowest ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.797$) and overall Readiness at only 4.76, signaling a gap in themed or entertainment-focused infrastructure. These contrasts suggest that Bacolod's planners should replicate the logistical playbook from sports events—efficient crowd flow, signage, and vendor support—to elevate festival experiences.

The correlations between constructs further illuminate strategy: Readiness and Viability correlate at $p = 0.744$ ($p < .001$), Viability and Brand Equity at $p = 0.806$ ($p < .001$), and Readiness and Brand Equity at $p = 0.667$ ($p < .001$). In practical terms, this means that facility and management enhancements (Readiness) will directly boost Bacolod's capacity to attract events (Viability), which in turn strengthens its reputation and distinctiveness (Brand Equity). The strongest link between Viability and Brand Equity underscores that ensuring market competitiveness and technical reliability is the fastest route to building—and maintaining—a powerful MICE brand (Almeyda & George, 2020).

Educational attainment shaped perceptions as well: college graduates ($M = 5.02$) and postgraduates ($M = 4.78$) rated Readiness more favorably than senior high ($M = 4.88$) and junior respondents ($M = 4.55$), suggesting that more highly educated delegates have both higher expectations and a keener appreciation for quality service (Wahyudin et al., 2019). Thus, communications emphasizing Bacolod's technical credentials and service standards may resonate particularly well with professional audiences, while experiential promotions—highlighting cultural attractions and leisure amenities—could engage less-technical segments more effectively.

In sum, the analysis reveals a clear roadmap: (1) prioritize amenity upgrades to close the readiness gap; (2) deploy proven sports-event logistics to festivals and conventions; (3) tailor safety, logistical, and promotional messaging to gender-specific priorities; and (4) leverage the strong Viability-Brand Equity linkage by showcasing Bacolod's market successes and technical investments in all branding efforts. By aligning these targeted interventions with the statistically validated relationships uncovered here, Bacolod City can cement its position as a best-in-class MICE destination that both meets—and exceeds—delegate expectations.

Conclusion:

Bacolod City's performance across readiness, viability, and brand equity confirms that it already stands as a formidable MICE destination. The city's lodging infrastructure and professional event management earn near-top marks—accommodation at 4.96 out of 6 and accountability at 4.93—demonstrating that delegates consistently encounter comfortable venues and well-coordinated programs. Its market appeal and technical frameworks translate into a 5.01 mean for market viability and a 5.00 mean for technical viability, underscoring planners' confidence in Bacolod's capacity to host complex events.

Yet beneath these strengths lie actionable gaps. Amenities—covering transport links, on-site support facilities, and leisure offerings—register at 4.84, making them the city's weakest readiness dimension. Accessibility, at 4.86, similarly signals the need for smoother first- and last-mile connections. While brand uniqueness (5.16) and quality (5.09) remain powerful differentiators, overall brand satisfaction dips to 5.00, suggesting that some post-event experiences fall short of the city's high promise.

Demographic analysis refines these insights further. Women rate almost every dimension higher than men, indicating particular trust in Bacolod's service environment, while younger delegates' lower mobility scores spotlight the necessity of targeted transport solutions. Event-type segmentation reveals that sports gatherings excel in amenities (5.17) and readiness (5.03), while festivals lag behind (amenities 4.65, readiness 4.76), highlighting the opportunity to export proven sports-event logistics to cultural and business-festival contexts.

The strong positive correlations among readiness, viability, and brand equity (all $p > 0.66$) confirm that strategic investments in infrastructure and service quality will yield compounded gains in market competitiveness and reputation. In sum, Bacolod City's MICE foundation is rock-solid, but concerted efforts to elevate amenities, sharpen accessibility, and close the satisfaction gap are essential to propel the city from a strong regional contender into a world-class destination.

Recommendations

To translate these findings into sustained competitive advantage, Bacolod City must pursue a multi-pronged, narrative-driven strategy that unites infrastructure, operations, marketing, and community engagement.

First, the city should embark on a systematic amenities modernization program. This entails upgrading convention-center support services—adding modular networking lounges, pop-up culinary stations showcasing local cuisine, and interactive cultural exhibits—to raise the amenities score into the "very high" tier. Venue operators, in partnership with the Hospitality & Restaurant Association, can co-curate these experiences, ensuring that every delegate encounter, from coffee break to gala dinner, reinforces Bacolod's unique brand identity.

Second, addressing accessibility challenges is critical. The Local Government Unit, together with the City Engineer's Office and the Land Transportation Authority, should launch dedicated MICE shuttle routes linking major hotels, airports, and event venues, complemented by smart wayfinding apps and clear multilingual signage. Implementing priority traffic lanes during peak events and integrating real-time transit updates will streamline delegate movement and transform mobility into a key selling point rather than a pain point.

Third, Bacolod must cross-apply proven event logistics from its top-rated sports gatherings into festival and conference settings. Event planners and the City Planning Office should formalize "best-practice" toolkits—covering crowd-flow designs, vendor-zoning layouts, and rapid setup/breakdown protocols—to ensure that logistical excellence becomes the norm across all event types, from musical festivals to high-level conventions.

Fourth, tailored marketing and communications will cement segment-specific resonance. The Department of Tourism and Public Information Office should develop gender-sensitive campaigns that highlight safety and organizational transparency for female planners, while emphasizing technical reliability and data-driven planning tools for male delegates. Younger audiences can be engaged through social-media influencers and interactive mobility demos, showcasing the city's upgraded shuttle networks and digital wayfinding features.

Fifth, Bacolod must deepen its technology and innovation integration. The Technology & Innovation Bureau and IT Department should deploy high-speed, redundant Wi-Fi and 5G coverage across MICE precincts, as well as hybrid-event platforms that allow seamless in-person and virtual participation. Real-time analytics dashboards—monitoring crowd heat-maps, satisfaction scores, and service-response times—will enable on-the-fly adjustments, ensuring that every event maintains the highest standards.

Finally, a robust feedback-and-refinement loop will sustain continuous improvement. By embedding post-event survey prompts into delegate badges or mobile apps, and by publicly reporting on enhancement milestones—such as shuttle ridership increases or new networking-lounge openings—Bacolod can convert its brand promise into measurable satisfaction gains. This transparent, data-driven approach will foster trust among organizers and attendees alike, ensuring that Bacolod's evolution from regional strength to world-class MICE destination is both dynamic and enduring.

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