

From attendance motives to satisfaction drivers: Extending the push–pull framework in academic conferences

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Abstract: Academic conferences play a key role in knowledge dissemination, professional development, and international collaboration. While prior research has extensively examined motivational factors influencing conference attendance, cross-national evidence on how these motivations translate into participant satisfaction remains limited. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the impact of key motivational factors on satisfaction among academic conference participants using a multi-country sample of academic conference attendees from 18 different countries. Drawing on the push–pull framework, five motivational dimensions are examined: destination and leisure, academic and professional development, networking, travel convenience, and costs. Data were collected via an online survey, resulting in 127 valid responses, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The results show that destination and leisure and academic and professional development significantly predict satisfaction, whereas networking, travel convenience, and costs do not. These findings highlight a distinction between attendance motives and satisfaction drivers and extend the push–pull framework to the post-conference evaluation stage, offering practical implications for conference design and management.

Keywords: *academic conferences, motivational factors, satisfaction*

JEL classification: Z31, M31, I23

Rad dostavljen: 23.01.2026.

Rad prihvaćen za objavljivanje: 14.02.2026.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic conferences provide a structured setting for the presentation of scholarly work by professors, researchers, experts, and students (Campos et al., 2018; Lewis & Kerr, 2012), while simultaneously convening specialists within specific fields to exchange knowledge and experiences, foster cooperation among researchers and institutions, and engage in informal peer review that enhances research quality and supports subsequent publication and citation outcomes (Bevanda & Bevanda, 2021; Chalvatzis & Ormosi, 2021; de Leon & McQuillin, 2020; Gorodnichenko et al., 2021).

As the number of academic conferences continues to grow globally, particularly with the expansion of online and hybrid formats (Olechnicka et al., 2025; Puccinelli et al., 2022; Ram et al., 2024), in the post-COVID-19 environment, the process of selecting which conference to attend has become increasingly complex and competitive. Prior research has extensively examined motivational factors influencing conference attendance, commonly applying the push–pull framework to explain participation behavior (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Push factors reflect internal needs and desires, such as academic development and networking, while pull factors relate to external conference attributes, including destination characteristics, program quality, accessibility, and costs (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; López-Bonilla et al., 2023; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Beyond destination-related attributes, prior research highlights academic and professional development, networking opportunities, travel convenience, and costs as key motivational dimensions shaping conference participation decisions (Alananzeh et al., 2018; Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Cavusoglu et al., 2023; López-Bonilla et al., 2023; Mair et al., 2018). While these factors have been widely examined in the literature, existing studies have predominantly focused on single-country contexts or narrowly defined participant groups, limiting the generalizability of their findings across different national, institutional, and disciplinary settings.

Against this backdrop, a clear research gap emerges regarding the lack of cross-national empirical evidence on the relationship between motivational factors and participant satisfaction in academic conferences. To address this gap, the present study examines the influence of key motivational factors on participant satisfaction using data collected from a diverse, multi-country sample of researchers. By simultaneously analyzing destination and leisure attributes, academic and professional development, networking, travel convenience, and costs, this study offers several contributions. First, it extends existing conference research by providing internationally grounded evidence that enhances the external validity of prior single-country findings. Second, it advances the application of the push–pull framework by empirically linking multiple motivational dimensions to participant satisfaction within a unified model. Finally, the study provides practical insights for conference organizers seeking to design competitive and participant-centered events that foster satisfaction, loyalty, and future attendance in a global academic marketplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic conferences serve as key platforms for the presentation of academic work and research conducted by professors, researchers, experts, and students, while simultaneously bringing together specialists from specific fields to exchange knowledge and experiences, engage in dialogue and debate, foster professional development, and establish enduring professional collaborations (Lewis & Kerr, 2012; Ram et al., 2024). These events facilitate the sharing of ideas with a strong orientation toward career advancement (Bjeljac, 2006), offering participants opportunities to achieve both professional and personal goals, receive constructive feedback on their work, and become familiar with the achievements of peers and leading experts in the field (McCarthy et al., 2004). In addition, meeting other researchers, maintaining professional networks (Chai & Freeman, 2019; Wang et al., 2017), and discovering new career opportunities (Kim et al., 2020; Rubinger et al., 2020) are all important to attendees. At the same time, conferences create a space that allows participants to temporarily escape daily routines and satisfy their need for change (López-Bonilla et al., 2023).

Individuals attend academic conferences for diverse professional and personal reasons, with attendance decisions shaped by their priorities, interests, and expectations (Preston, 2012). Each year, numer-

ous organizations and academic institutions worldwide organize conferences at national, regional, and international levels. As the number of available conferences continues to increase, the decision-making process regarding conference selection has become more complex, with multiple factors influencing participants' evaluations and preferences. These factors guide individuals toward events that best align with their research objectives, career development goals, and contextual constraints. In the post-COVID-19 environment, the widespread adoption of online and hybrid conference formats has further expanded participation opportunities while intensifying competition among conferences and increasing the complexity of conference choice.

The decision to participate in a conference is formed in the initial phase of the purchasing decision-making process, during which individuals recognize a need and actively seek relevant information (Albayrak & Caber, 2018). This process is continuous and interrelated (Mill & Morrison, 2012), with motivational factors playing a central role. Within the literature, these motivations are commonly conceptualized through the push–pull framework. Push factors refer to internal, psychological drivers that originate from individual needs and desires, whereas pull factors represent external attributes of the conference offering that attract potential participants. Importantly, pull factors may reinforce or intensify motivations initially triggered by push factors (López-Bonilla et al., 2023; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Among the most frequently cited push motivations is the desire to escape everyday routines and personal pressures and to seek new experiences, conceptualized as an internal psychological driver of participation behavior within motivation theory and the push–pull framework (Andreu et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2003; Wu & Pearce, 2014). These internal motivations are often activated and amplified by destination-related pull factors, particularly the perceived attractiveness and safety of the conference location. Prior studies indicate that a positive destination image, encompassing both aesthetic appeal and perceived security, significantly influences participation decisions, as it contributes to higher satisfaction, enhances perceived value, and increases the likelihood of attendance (Alananzeh et al., 2018; Fak-ey & Crompton, 1991; Jae Lee & Back, 2005). Social programs and tourist attractions of the destination further motivate participants and their companions, whereas reasons such as visiting family and friends are generally considered the least important (Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Yoo & Chon, 2008).

Academic and professional development represent a key motivational driver of conference participation (Aktas & Demirel, 2019; Kim & Malek, 2017). Academic development emerges as the dominant need, reflecting participants' strong orientation toward expanding knowledge and strengthening professional competencies. This motivation involves acquiring new research methodologies, gaining insights into emerging research areas, and receiving constructive feedback aimed at improving research quality. Consequently, conferences are perceived not only as platforms for knowledge dissemination but also as structured learning environments. This educational function is particularly relevant for early-career researchers, who view conferences as opportunities to develop presentation skills and support their ongoing academic progression (Aktas & Demirel, 2019).

Networking is also widely recognized as one of the core motivational drivers of participation in business and academic events (Jago & Deery, 2005; Mair et al., 2018; Qi et al., 2019). Attendees are motivated by opportunities to develop and maintain professional relationships, initiate collaborative projects, and translate social interactions into career-related and organizational benefits (Colombo & Marques, 2020; Kim & Malek, 2017). Furthermore, a sense of community represents an important complementary motivational element, encompassing feelings of mutual connectedness, emotional bonds, and shared trust that members will collectively fulfill their professional and social needs (Hahm et al., 2016; Skoultzos et al., 2020). Prior research consistently demonstrates that the availability and quality of networking opportunities significantly influence attendee satisfaction, as productive professional exchanges enhance perceived event value and overall experiential outcomes (Jung & Tanford, 2017; Kitchen, 2017; Quadri-Felitti et al., 2025; Tanford et al., 2012). Furthermore, a sense of community represents an important motivational element, encompassing mutual connectedness, emotional bonds, and trust that members will collectively fulfill their needs (Hahm et al., 2016; Skoultzos et al., 2020).

Travel convenience is an important factor influencing conference attendance, as travel distance, time requirements, and accessibility may constrain participation. Transportation represents the key means of reaching the destination, making geographical connectivity a decisive element in attendance decisions (Lumsdon & Page, 2004). Proximity to the conference venue reduces travel-related costs and logistical burden, thereby increasing the likelihood of participation

(Oppermann & Chon, 1997). In addition, well-developed transport infrastructure enhances accessibility and lowers both time and financial costs, strengthening the overall attractiveness of the destination (Alanzeh et al., 2019). Temporal considerations, including conference timing and duration, further shape attendance decisions due to individuals' limited time availability (López-Bonilla et al., 2023).

Costs represent a critical determinant of conference participation as cost-related considerations strongly influence attendance decisions. Costs are consistently identified as one of the most influential factors in travel-related decision-making and a key element affecting conference attendance (Cavusoglu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2007). In the context of professional and academic tourism, cost structures tend to be more rigid than in leisure tourism, limiting participants' flexibility in adjusting expenses. The lack of sufficient financial resources may therefore constitute a fundamental barrier to conference participation and, in some cases, the decisive reason for non-attendance (López-Bonilla et al., 2023; Oppermann & Chon, 1997). As a result, total participation costs, encompassing registration fees, travel, accommodation, and related expenditures, play a central role in shaping conference selection decisions, particularly for early-career researchers and participants with limited institutional support.

Prior research in service contexts emphasizes that perceived value is a complex, multidimensional concept and that value perceptions are closely linked to satisfaction and loyalty outcomes (Topalović & Marinković, 2020). Satisfaction, as a core concept in consumer behavior, is closely related to customer experience and refers to the extent to which a product or service meets or exceeds users' needs and expectations, with satisfaction arising when perceived performance surpasses prior expectations (Hussain et al., 2025; Urošević & Dukić, 2024). In the context of academic conferences, satisfaction represents a post-consumption evaluation reflecting the degree to which participants' initial motivations and expectations are fulfilled through the conference experience. As participation decisions are formed early in the decision-making process and shaped by both push and pull motivations, satisfaction emerges from the alignment between internal drivers, such as academic and professional development, networking, and the pursuit of new experiences (Aktas & Demirel, 2019; Albayrak & Caber, 2018; López-Bonilla et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2019), and external conference attributes, including destination characteristics, program quality, ac-

cessibility, and cost structure (Alananzeh et al., 2019; Cavusoglu et al., 2023; Jae Lee & Back, 2005). Satisfied participants are more likely to evaluate a conference favorably relative to alternative events in future decision-making processes (Oppermann & Chon, 1997). However, satisfaction alone does not ensure repeat participation, as factors such as costs, destination attributes, and academic or professional opportunities may outweigh prior positive experience. Nevertheless, insufficient satisfaction substantially reduces the likelihood of future attendance, highlighting satisfaction as a key antecedent of conference loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Severt et al., 2007).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate the influence of motivational factors on the satisfaction of academic conference participants, an empirical study was conducted using a structured survey design. The questionnaire was developed in an online format and distributed to potential respondents via e-mail. Data were collected in February 2025, during which the survey was sent to 300 e-mail addresses. In total, 127 fully completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 42.3%, which is considered acceptable (Wu et al., 2022). The primary inclusion criterion was prior participation in at least one academic conference within a specified time frame (the last 3, 6, or 12 months, or earlier). The final sample comprised participants from diverse scientific disciplines and professional backgrounds, allowing for a more comprehensive examination of how motivational factors shape participant satisfaction and loyalty.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included questions about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, academic position, and nationality), as well as questions related to the characteristics of the conference (conference type, number of participants, date, topic, and location). The second part of the questionnaire consisted of six groups of questions (factors), comprising a total of 21 items, which respondents evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated “absolutely unimportant” and 5 indicated “very important”. The items related to motivational factors were adapted from López-Bonilla et al. (2023), while the items measuring satisfaction were adopted from Lewis and Kerr (2012). Satisfaction was conceptualized and measured as an overall, unidimensional construct reflecting participants’ general evaluation of their conference

experience, operationalized through overall conference satisfaction and willingness to recommend the conference, rather than satisfaction with specific conference attributes.

The sample was predominantly composed of women (65.9%), while men accounted for 34.1% of respondents. Although less represented, male participants were present across all age groups and academic ranks. The largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 45–54 age group (38.6%), followed by those aged 35–44 (31.5%) and those aged 55 years or older (21.3%). Participants aged 25–34 accounted for 7.9% of the sample, while respondents aged 24 or younger represented only 0.8%. Associate professors constituted the largest share of the sample (32.3%), followed by full professors (22.8%). Senior lecturers/assistant professors and associate lecturers/lecturers were equally represented, each accounting for 18.1% of respondents. Postgraduate students comprised 6.3% of the sample, while participants classified under other academic positions represented 2.4%. Most respondents had attended an academic conference within the past three (60.6%) or six months (22.0%), while only a small proportion reported participation more than 12 months before the survey (3.1%).

Based on the responses provided, the conferences attended by the respondents were held across a wide range of countries and cities, confirming their pronounced international character, as the participants originated from 18 different countries. The largest proportion of respondents reported that their most recent conference took place in Austria (predominantly in Vienna), followed by Serbia (Belgrade, Kopaonik, Niš, Kragujevac), Croatia (Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Varaždin, Osijek, Motovun), Albania (Tirana, Korça, Shkodra, Vlora), Romania (Bucharest, Oradea, Braşov, Bacău, Svishtov), Bulgaria (Varna, Bansko, Shumen), Italy (Rome, Pavia, Ascoli Piceno, Modena, Brescia), Germany (Berlin, Munich), Portugal (Lisbon, Coimbra, Faro), and Hungary (Budapest, Győr). Additional destinations included Turkey (Istanbul, Edirne), France (Marseille, Bordeaux, Périgueux), Spain (Madrid), the United Arab Emirates (Dubai), Greece (Athens, Serres), North Macedonia (Ohrid, Štip), the Czech Republic (Brno, Ostrava), Slovakia (Košice, Bratislava), Belgium (Liège, Leuven), the United Kingdom (London), Malta (Valletta, St. Julian’s), and Morocco (Marrakesh). Although the sample included participants from 18 different countries, the analysis did not aim to compare country-level differences in motivational factors or satisfaction. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the uneven distribution

of respondents across countries, the national context was not treated as an independent analytical variable. Instead, the international composition of the sample was used to enhance the external validity of the findings and to capture a broad, cross-national perspective on academic conference participation.

The analysis of the responses indicates that the conferences attended by the respondents covered a broad spectrum of thematic areas, although several dominant themes clearly emerged. Most participants reported that the primary focus of the conferences was on economics, frequently combined with topics related to management, finance, tourism, and innovation. Management represented the second most prevalent thematic area, encompassing specific subfields such as strategic management, leadership, innovation, and organizational development. Tourism also appeared as a prominent topic, often linked to hospitality, rural development, and sustainability. Other thematic areas, including law, agricultural economics, sustainable logistics, energy, marketing, human rights, digitalization, cybersecurity, education, sociology, and engineering, were reported less frequently, alongside various multidisciplinary topics.

The majority of respondents reported having participated in international conferences, whereas a smaller proportion attended regional events and even fewer took part in national conferences. Regarding conference size, events hosting 50–100 participants and those with more than 100 participants were the most frequently reported, while conferences with fewer than 50 participants were comparatively rare.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed descriptive statistics to calculate mean values and standard deviations for all items and constructs, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency, Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationships between motivational and satisfaction factors, and multiple regression analysis to evaluate the effects of individual motivational factors on attendee satisfaction.

The analysis identified five main factors shaping the motivation and satisfaction of conference participants. Factor 1 (F1), labelled Destination and leisure, comprises five items related to destination character-

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and reliability of measurement scales

Factors and items	N	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha
F1: Destination and leisure				.701
Destination attractiveness	127	4.31	.904	
Visiting family and friends	127	2.50	1.414	
Activity program	127	4.15	1.016	
Escape from daily routine	127	4.12	1.044	
Destination safety	127	4.47	.898	
F2: Academic and professional development				.681
Academic motivations	127	4.65	.571	
Conference agenda	127	4.28	.916	
Professional reasons	127	4.57	.673	
Career advancement	127	4.65	.571	
F3: Networking				.754
Networking opportunities	127	4.29	.901	
Business activities	127	3.48	1.188	
Sense of belonging to a community	127	3.91	1.042	
F4: Travel convenience				.672
Distance to the conference location	127	3.67	1.291	
Conference duration	127	3.87	1.098	
Conference dates	127	4.05	1.061	
F5: Costs				.885
Registration fee	127	4.18	1.144	
Whether the participant personally bears the costs	127	4.20	1.113	
Satisfaction				.871
Overall conference satisfaction	127	4.45	.731	
Willingness to recommend the conference	127	4.23	.799	

Source: Authors' own research

istics and leisure opportunities offered by the conference, encompassing both personal motives (e.g., escaping daily routine) and family-related aspects (e.g., visiting friends and relatives). Within this factor, destination safety received the highest mean score ($M = 4.47$), followed by destination attractiveness ($M = 4.31$), whereas visiting family members and friends was rated lowest ($M = 2.50$). This pattern suggests that participants place greater emphasis on safety and destination appeal than on social or family-related considerations.

Factor 2 (F2), termed Academic and professional development, includes four items associated with the conference theme and participants' educational and professional aspirations. Academic motives ($M = 4.65$) and career advancement ($M = 4.65$) achieved the highest ratings, while professional reasons were also highly valued ($M = 4.57$), highlighting the central role of scholarly and career-oriented motives in shaping participation decisions.

Factor 3 (F3), labelled Networking, consists of three items reflecting personal and professional relationship-building. Among these, networking opportunities were rated most highly ($M = 4.29$), whereas business-related activities were considered comparatively less important ($M = 3.48$), indicating that participants primarily value informal and professional social interaction over transactional engagement.

Factor 4 (F4), referred to as Travel convenience, comprises three items capturing the temporal and spatial accessibility of the conference. The results show that the conference date ($M = 4.05$) was evaluated more favorably than the duration ($M = 3.87$) and distance to the venue ($M = 3.67$), suggesting that scheduling convenience outweighs geographical proximity in shaping attendance decisions.

Factor 5 (F5), named Costs, includes two items related to the financial aspects of participation. Both the registration fee ($M = 4.18$) and self-financing ($M = 4.20$) received similar mean values, indicating that although financial considerations are relevant, participants largely perceive conference participation as a worthwhile investment.

Finally, the satisfaction-related items revealed a high overall level of positive evaluation. Overall satisfaction with the conference ($M = 4.45$) and willingness to recommend the event ($M = 4.23$) confirm a favorable participant experience. Among all motivational dimensions, academic motives and career advancement emerged as the most influential drivers ($M = 4.65$), whereas visiting family members and friends was rated as the least important ($M = 2.50$). These

findings underscore that professional and academic motivations constitute the primary determinants of conference participation, while personal and social motives play a comparatively secondary role.

The reliability and internal consistency of the items grouped around each factor were measured using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.672 (Travel opportunity) to 0.885 (Costs), indicating satisfactory internal consistency for most factors, with slightly lower values for the factors Academic and professional development ($\alpha = 0.681$) and Travel opportunity ($\alpha = 0.672$), which are still acceptable in the context of exploratory research (Hair et al., 2013).

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 2. An examination of Pearson's correlation coefficients revealed that Destination and leisure, Academic and professional development, and Networking are the factors most strongly associated with participant satisfaction. The strongest correlation was observed between Destination and leisure and Networking ($r = 0.568$, $p < 0.01$). Academic and professional development ($r = 0.384$, $p < 0.01$) and Destination and leisure ($r = 0.359$, $p < 0.01$) also exhibited significant positive relationships with satisfaction. In contrast, the factors Costs and Travel convenience showed weaker or less consistent correlations with satisfaction, suggesting that financial and logistical aspects exert a less direct influence on participants' overall experience compared to the content of the conference and opportunities for professional networking.

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that Destination and leisure ($\beta = .272$, $p = .006$) and Academic and professional development ($\beta = .318$, $p < .001$) are statistically significant positive predictors of satisfaction. In contrast, Networking ($\beta = -.007$, $p = .947$), Travel convenience ($\beta = .084$, $p = .321$), and Costs ($\beta = -.048$, $p = .571$) did not exhibit a significant effect. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and all values ranged from 1.10 to 1.72, which is well below the recommended cut-off thresholds (Field, 2000). This indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model, and the estimated regression coefficients can be interpreted with confidence.

The significant effect of Destination and leisure aligns with earlier findings highlighting the importance of destination attractiveness, perceived safety, and leisure-related attributes in enhancing conference satisfaction and perceived value (López-Bonilla et al., 2023; Pavluković & Cimbaljević, 2020; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Yoo & Chon, 2008). These results suggest

Table 2: Correlation matrix

		Destination and leisure	Academic and professional development	Networking	Travel convenience	Costs	Satisfaction
Destination and leisure	Pearson Correlation	1	.261**	.568**	.187*	.164	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.000	.035	.066	.000
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
Academic and professional development	Pearson Correlation	.261**	1	.364**	.021	.083	.384**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.000	.813	.356	.000
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
Networking	Pearson Correlation	.568**	.364**	1	.263**	.261**	.273**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.003	.003	.002
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
Travel convenience	Pearson Correlation	.187*	.021	.263**	1	.222*	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.813	.003		.012	.147
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
Costs	Pearson Correlation	.164	.083	.261**	.222*	1	.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.066	.356	.003	.012		.656
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.359**	.384**	.273**	.129	.040	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.147	.656	
	N	127	127	127	127	127	127

** Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Authors' own research

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. error	β			
(Constant)	2.728	1.118		2.441	.016	1.489
Destination and leisure	.108	.039	.272	2.785	.006	1.167
Academic and professional development	.203	.055	.318	3.683	.000	1.717
Networking	-.004	.059	-.007	-.066	.947	1.115
Travel convenience	.045	.045	.084	.996	.321	1.103
Costs	-.032	.057	-.048	-.568	.571	1.489

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Source: Authors' own research

that, alongside academic content, the broader experiential context of the conference, particularly the quality and safety of the destination, plays a meaningful role in shaping participants' overall evaluations.

The strong positive influence of Academic and professional development on satisfaction is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the central role of educational value, program quality, and career-related outcomes in shaping conference experiences. Previ-

ous research has repeatedly shown that opportunities for learning, academic advancement, and professional growth represent core drivers of satisfaction among conference participants (Aktas & Demirel, 2019; Mair et al., 2018; Olechnicka et al., 2025; Yoo & Chon, 2008). This result reinforces the view of academic conferences as structured learning environments in which intellectual value and scholarly development remain the primary sources of positive evaluation.

In contrast to a substantial body of prior research, the present findings indicate that Costs, Travel convenience, and Networking do not exert a statistically significant direct effect on participant satisfaction. This result stands in opposition to studies that consistently identify costs as one of the most influential factors in travel-related decision-making and a key determinant of conference attendance (Cavusoglu et al., 2023), as well as to research emphasizing networking as a core motivational driver of participation in business and academic events (Colombo & Marques, 2020; Mair et al., 2018; Quadri-Felitti et al., 2025). Similarly, previous studies highlight the importance of travel accessibility and transport infrastructure in shaping conference-related evaluations and experiences (Alanzeh et al., 2019). These contrasting findings suggest that, although Costs, Networking opportunities, and Travel convenience strongly influence the initial decision to attend a conference, their role in shaping post-event satisfaction may be more limited once participation has occurred. This indicates a distinction between factors that function as attendance motivators or constraints and those that serve as satisfaction drivers, particularly among experienced academic participants and in increasingly normalized online and hybrid conference formats.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of key motivational factors in shaping participant satisfaction at academic conferences, drawing on a diverse, multi-country sample of academics and researchers. By applying the push-pull framework and simultaneously analyzing Destination and leisure attributes, Academic and professional development, Networking, Travel convenience, and Costs, the study provides a comprehensive perspective on how different motivational dimensions translate into post-conference satisfaction.

The findings clearly indicate that Destination and leisure and Academic and professional development are the most influential predictors of satisfaction. These results underscore the primacy of intellectual value, learning opportunities, and career-related outcomes in the evaluation of conference experiences, while also highlighting the importance of destination-related attributes such as attractiveness and perceived safety. Together, these factors confirm that satisfaction at academic conferences is largely driven by the successful fulfillment of participants' core academic objectives and by a positive experiential environment.

In contrast, Networking, Travel convenience, and Costs did not demonstrate a statistically significant direct effect on satisfaction. While these factors are widely acknowledged in the literature as important drivers of conference attendance, the present findings suggest that their influence may diminish once participation has occurred. The results imply that participation decisions and subsequent evaluations are driven by partly different factors, especially among senior scholars, as online and hybrid conferences become more established.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the conference and event management literature by extending the application of the push-pull framework beyond the attendance decision phase to the post-consumption evaluation stage. In doing so, it responds to calls for a clearer conceptual separation between motivation to attend events and the mechanisms underlying satisfaction and post-event evaluation. The findings demonstrate that motivational factors traditionally treated as homogeneous antecedents do not exert uniform effects on satisfaction, thereby refining the explanatory scope of the push-pull framework in conference experience research. More broadly, the results contribute to event satisfaction theory by supporting a shift from attribute-based evaluations toward a value-oriented perspective, in which intellectual enrichment, learning outcomes, and professional development function as core drivers of satisfaction. By relying on a cross-national and multidisciplinary sample, the study further enhances the external validity of prior research, which has predominantly focused on single-country contexts or narrowly defined participant groups.

Practically, the findings offer valuable guidance for conference organizers and academic institutions. To enhance participant satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty, organizers should prioritize the quality of academic programs, opportunities for professional development, and meaningful intellectual engagement. Attention should also be given to destination-related attributes, particularly safety, attractiveness, and the overall experiential context of the event. While competitive pricing, convenient scheduling, and networking opportunities remain important for attracting participants, these elements alone are insufficient to ensure satisfaction if core academic and experiential expectations are not met. As such, organizers should adopt a holistic, participant-centered approach that balances academic excellence with experiential quality.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the

research design is cross-sectional and based on self-reported survey data, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences and may be subject to response bias. Second, although the sample includes participants from multiple countries and disciplines, the overall sample size remains relatively modest, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Third, the study does not explicitly differentiate between conference formats (on-site, online, and hybrid), even though these formats may shape motivational structures and satisfaction in different ways. Finally, the analysis focuses on direct effects and does not explore potential mediating or moderating mechanisms that could further explain the relationship between motivation and satisfaction.

Future research could build on these findings in several ways. Longitudinal studies would allow researchers to examine how motivations and satisfaction evolve over time and across repeated conference participation. Larger samples and comparative cross-country designs could further strengthen the generalizability of results and enable more nuanced cultural or institutional comparisons. Additionally, future studies should explicitly compare on-site, online, and hybrid conference formats to better understand how digitalization influences motivational priorities and satisfaction outcomes.

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Apstrakt

Od motiva za prisustvo do faktora zadovoljstva: proširenje push–pull okvira u akademskim konferencijama

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Naučne konferencije imaju ključnu ulogu u širenju i razmeni znanja, profesionalnom razvoju i međunarodnoj saradnji. Iako su prethodna istraživanja u velikoj meri razmatrala motivacione faktore koji utiču na odluku o učešću na konferencijama, komparativni međunarodni dokazi o tome kako se ovi motivacioni faktori odražavaju na zadovoljstvo učesnika i dalje su ograničeni. U cilju popunjavanja ovog istraživačkog jaza, ovo istraživanje ispituje uticaj ključnih motivacionih faktora na zadovoljstvo učesnika naučnih konferencija na osnovu uzorka učesnika naučnih konferencija iz 18 zemalja. Polazeći od push–pull okvira, analizirano je pet motivacionih faktora: destinacija i slobodno vreme, akademski i profesionalni razvoj, umrežavanje, pogodnost putovanja i troškovi. Podaci su prikupljeni putem onlajn upitnika, pri čemu je dobijeno 127 validnih odgovora, a

analizirani su primenom deskriptivne statistike, analize pouzdanosti, Pirsonove korelacione analize i višestruke regresione analize. Rezultati ukazuju da karakteristike destinacije i slobodnog vremena, kao i akademski i profesionalni razvoj, imaju statistički značajan uticaj na zadovoljstvo učesnika, dok umrežavanje, pogodnost putovanja i troškovi ne pokazuju značajan direktan efekat. Ovi nalazi ukazuju na razliku između faktora koji podstiču učešće i faktora koji oblikuju postkonferencijsko zadovoljstvo, te proširuju primenu push–pull okvira na fazu evaluacije nakon učešća, nudeći praktične implikacije za dizajn i upravljanje naučnim konferencijama.

Ključne reči: *naučne konferencije, motivacioni faktori, satisfakcija učesnika*

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